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Reading the Bible across Contexts

*Luke's Gospel, Socio-Economic Marginality, and
Latin American Biblical Hermeneutics*

By

Esa Autero



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List of Abbreviations

For abbreviations of ancient works and other abbreviations not included on this list, see *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999).

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 4th Rev. and aug. ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
BDF	Blass, F. and A. Debrunner. <i>A Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Trans. and ed. by R. W. Funk. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
CEB	Comunidades Ecclesiales de Base
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Ed. by G. A. Buttricks. Nashville: Abington Press, 1962.
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IRM	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEPTA	<i>Journal of European Pentecostal Theological Association</i>
JPT	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
JPTSS	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplementary Series
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	Journal for the Study of New Testament

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LQ	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i>
LTQ	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
LSJ	H. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. Jones, <i>Greek English Lexicon</i> . Oxford, 1996
NDBTh	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i> . Edited by T. Alexander and B. Rosner. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2000.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDCPM	<i>New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements</i> . Edited by S. Burgess and E. vander Maas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NVI	Nueva Version Internacional
PRS	<i>Perspectives on Religious Studies</i>
RIBLA	<i>Revista de interpretación bíblica Latinoamericana</i>
RV	Reina Valera
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SESJ	Suomen eksegeettisen seuran julkaisuja
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and G. Friedrich. Trans. by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TEAO	<i>Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible</i> . Eds. by Hans de Wit et al. Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004.
TPINTC	TPI New Testament Commentaries
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
WBC	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>

Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

I sit on a broken chair next to a rustic hut that is strung together with cardboard, wooden planks, and sheets of metal. The air is buzzing with mosquitoes and a baby sleeps quietly in a nearby wheelbarrow as I listen attentively to the pastor's exposition. This is not a church service but a casual visit to a home of *loteadores*—people who invade empty lots due to poverty and lack of proper places to live. The stench of the nearby garbage fills my nostrils as Juan finishes emptying the bags he collected that morning in the hope of finding something worth a few *bolivianos*.¹ Juan and the pastor casually discuss a law according to which *loteadores* may receive a land title after living on it for five years. Five years is long gone, and Juan's desire has not materialized. As the discussion on land and politics comes to a halt, the pastor relates briefly the biblical legislation about the return of the land and the remission of debts. Suddenly Juan's weary eyes light up, and he starts to listen attentively. He admits that he had never heard of such a story. After this, the pastor moves on to relate the story of Daniel in the lion's den, peppering the story with humor, while he emphasizes Daniel's faith and courage in the midst the impossible situation. The pastor transitions smoothly from the story to encourage Juan to be valiant and strong in faith and trust in God, just as Daniel did. Juan seems to be visibly moved by the pastor's exposition of the Bible and the personal encouragement he offered. Finally, the pastor says a prayer for the whole family and invites them to visit the church's soup kitchen a few blocks away.

Needless to say, I was both moved and surprised by the experience. The pastor's ability to connect relevant biblical texts, personal encouragement, and the local socio-political realities was impressive. Perhaps more surprising, however, was the fact that the pastor had no connections to liberation theology or to the Latin American ecclesial base communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base*, CEBs). Quite the contrary, he was a Pentecostal pastor who had grown up in the streets and gutters of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and had no formal education, except attending a small Bible institute. In the encounter that I had witnessed, the Bible was used to encourage Juan and to connect him with his hope for a plot of land. The above-mentioned exposition is certainly of the sort that is not found in scholarly commentaries or books. As such, it highlights how ordinary Bolivian Pentecostals may interpret and use biblical stories to engender hope in the midst of hopelessness. A scholarly analysis of Jubilee legislation or the book of Daniel would hardly have touched Juan the way the

¹ *Boliviano* is the currency used in Bolivia.

pastor's exposition did. Yet, needless to say, not all popular readings are equally positive, as will be seen later.

Since the inception of Latin American liberation theology in the 1960s, biblical scholars have become increasingly aware of the impact of various contextual realities, for example, poverty, race, class, or gender, and their influence on biblical hermeneutics.² While traditional historical-critical scholarship was avowedly detached and objective,³ the inception of liberation and feminist hermeneutics has exposed the contextual nature of all biblical interpretations. Hence, nowadays it is more accurate to say that contextual hermeneutics of all types include those approaches that deliberately foreground a critical lens or a given socio-economic or religious reality in the reading process.⁴ The idea of objective biblical scholarship has been further complicated by the emergence of a postmodern paradigm and the blurring of old dichotomies between hermeneutics and exegesis.⁵ Yet, the varying contextual approaches are not without problems either, not least because of the danger of rejecting criticism from without or being overly focused on the context at the expense of engaging the text.

Latin American liberation theologians were among the first vocal critics of Western biblical scholarship.⁶ As a result of the perceived ideological captiv-

2 The context here means broadly any social and ideological factors. See A. Brenner and N. Duran, "Preface," in *Mark: Texts and Contexts* (eds. A. Brenner and N. Duran; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), vii–xi.

3 John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–52; K. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* (1962) 1:418–432.

4 Thiselton –divides the hermeneutical approaches into two broad camps; that is, metacritical and socio-critical and context-relative socio-pragmatic. According to the former, it is possible to discover trans-contextual criteria for interpretation; the latter insists that such do not exist since every criterion is contingent upon its own situatedness. See *New Horizons in Hermeneutics. The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 4–15.

5 F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies. A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 34–54, 119–156; Stendahl, "Biblical Theology," 1:418–432; A. K. M. Adam, *Faithful Interpretation: Reading in a Postmodern World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 37–64.

6 See José P. Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1971), 1–33, 201–292. Feminist and black hermeneutics provided other early critiques of the traditional historical-critical paradigm (see also A. Pilarski, "The Past and Future of Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics," *BTB* 41 (2011): 16–23; C. Felder, Cain H., "Introduction," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (ed. C. Felder; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 1–14; V. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans: An Outline of an Interpretative History," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (ed. C. Felder; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 81–97. See also Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 420–470.

ity of Western academics, they sought to emphasize the importance of the poor and oppressed as biblical interpreters.⁷ After all, according to many, the poor are the original protagonists of liberation theology.⁸ Nevertheless, there is hardly any empirical research on the interpretative processes of the ordinary Latin American biblical interpreters.⁹ Further, it is not quite clear how the poor or their experience is connected to this epistemological and hermeneutical primacy.

From a different angle, Daniel Smith-Christopher has proposed that recent sociological and anthropological studies are only partially helpful for biblical scholars. That is, second-hand reports by anthropologists or sociologists are not sufficient for scrutinizing diverse aspects of the Bible. Rather, important insights might be gained into the biblical texts, even in terms of their historical meaning, through directly engaging ordinary biblical readers from various socio-cultural locations.¹⁰ His suggestion of “cultural exegesis” raises another important question regarding liberation hermeneutics: Can Latin American relevance seeking readings offer something beyond their immediate communities and situations?¹¹

As such, liberation theologians have insisted that the popular reading in Latin America has brought forth a new way of reading the Bible, including new insights into the biblical texts.¹² Thus, the poor have been given primacy as biblical interpreters and, as a result, sometimes are idealized. Yet, as Hans de Wit has demonstrated, the concept of a popular or ordinary reader is an ambiguous category and often implies a poor, socio-politically active and idealized member of the CEBS.¹³

7 Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, 1–108; Pablo Richard, “Lectura popular de la Biblia en América Latina. Hermenéutica de la Liberación,” in *Lectura Popular de la Biblia en América Latina. RIBLA #1* (1988), 30–48; Carlos Mesters, *Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible* (trans. F. McDonagh; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 5–54, 160–171.

8 Ondina E. Gonzáles and Justo L. Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 254–255; Richard, “Lectura popular,” 30–31.

9 H. de Wit, “Through the Eyes of Another: Objectives and Backgrounds,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (ed. H. de Wit et al.; Amsterdam Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 41–42.

10 Daniel Smith-Christopher, “Introduction,” in *Text & Experience: Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible* (ed. D. Smith-Christopher; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 11–22.

11 Smith-Christopher, “Introduction,” 16.

12 Richard, “Lectura popular,” 30–48; Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 5–54.

13 Hans de Wit, *En la dispersión el texto es patria. Introducción a la hermeneútica clásica, moderna y posmoderna* (2da edición; San José: UBL, 2010), 238–240, 258–261.

One of the weaknesses of contextual hermeneutics has been the difficulty of determining who is speaking for whom and about what aspects of contextual realities. In other words, there is often an inherent ambiguity that begs clarification. As such, the connection to the concept of ordinary Latin American reader is obvious. Yet, it is my contention that both liberation hermeneutics and contextual approaches are important developments in the widening repertoire of critical lenses within the guild of biblical studies. At the least, they have alerted scholars to the new and important hermeneutical realities by challenging the traditional objectivism of Western biblical scholarship. Finally, Smith-Christopher's challenge to engage flesh-and-blood readers beyond one's own context with the hopes of gaining new insights into the historical meaning of the text cannot be bypassed. To my knowledge, nobody has directly taken up his challenge that was given over twenty years ago.

In light of this background, this book addresses hermeneutical ambiguity surrounding ordinary Latin American Bible readers.¹⁴ The focus is not on the CEBs, however, but on the lesser-known ordinary readers—the Pentecostals. As such, two small Bolivian Pentecostal communities participated in the empirical part of this study. One of the communities was relatively affluent, whereas the second lived in poverty.¹⁵ Both were asked to read sections of Luke's poverty texts in small groups, after which their readings and hermeneutical processes were analyzed and compared. This procedure helped evaluate the influence of socio-economic status on their interpretative processes vis-à-vis liberation theologians' understanding of the poor as biblical interpreters. In addition to this empirical component, scholarly readings of the same Lucan texts were reviewed and analyzed with the goal to bring the two reading horizons into a critical dialogue with each other. These procedures shed light, as will be seen, on a number of issues raised above.

The goal of this book thus was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the hermeneutical processes of two specific communities of ordinary Bolivian readers and how this perspective might be combined with a historically oriented scholarly exegesis; especially as these related to the theme of wealth

14 Ordinary readers throughout this study refer to those readers of the Bible who have no formal academic formation as biblical scholars. Thus, the term is not used metaphorically for poor (spiritually or concretely) or oppressed, nor is it used pejoratively, but refers to a certain reading attitude (critical vs. non-critical). See H. de Wit, "Objectives and Backgrounds," 6–10; G. West, "Introduction," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Scholars Reading Together with Their Local Communities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–5.

15 See pp. 111–114 for demographic and socio-economic information about the groups.

and poverty in Luke's gospel. This meant investigating how the interpretative processes of the Bolivian groups might function in dialogue with historically oriented biblical scholarship and exegesis of Luke's gospel. As such, the book had a three-fold focus: 1) hermeneutical processes of ordinary Bolivian readers, 2) historical exegesis of Luke's poverty texts, and 3) critical dialogue between the two contexts or reading horizons. Since in-depth research that includes a similar focus had not been conducted in the past to my knowledge, a considerable amount of space was also dedicated to methodological reflection.

The following questions guided the book:

- a. What hermeneutical processes guide the ordinary Bolivian biblical interpreters and to what extent may these contribute to the scholarly understanding of socio-economic marginality in Luke's gospel and to further development of global and contextual methodologies in biblical studies?
- b. Does the socio-economic location of the ordinary Bolivian readers influence their interpretation of selected texts in Luke's gospel?
- c. To what extent may the scholarly and ordinary Bolivian readings and interpretative perspectives of Luke's texts on socio-economic marginalization enrich each other?

The main hypothesis was that ordinary and scholarly readings of the Bible might be mutually illuminating. It remained to be seen, however, to what extent and in what situations this might be the case. Further, it was also anticipated that the socio-economic location of the readers influenced the interpretative processes and results. As such, Latin American liberation theologians were assumed to have been right, albeit exaggerating their claims and lacking nuance in details.

It was hoped that by exploring these themes this project would not only contribute to the scholarly discussions in the fields of biblical studies, hermeneutics, and religion, but that it also would stimulate global human concerns regarding the relationship between religion, social inequality, poverty, and oppression.

The outline of the book may be stated as follows. The first part discusses the background and methodological issues. Chapter one is dedicated to exploring various hermeneutical approaches in present-day Latin America; that is, the well-known liberation theology and particularly its recent developments. This is followed by a review of Pentecostal hermeneutics. Unfortunately, insufficient research has been conducted on Pentecostal hermeneutics that focuses on the way biblical texts are interpreted and used among Latin American Pentecostals. The data regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics was largely gleaned from short studies and articles on hermeneutics as well as sociological research

and anthropological studies that have commented on the Pentecostal communities' use of the Bible in liturgy and communal settings. Chapter one concludes with a brief comparison of liberation and Pentecostal hermeneutics.

Chapter two focuses on methodology. This includes a thorough review and evaluation of a new method called empirical hermeneutics, which is followed by a detailed presentation of the empirical case study protocol and procedures. The next section lays out the methods that were used in the exegesis of the Lucan passages as well as the way present-day empirical materials were brought into dialogue with the historically oriented exegesis of Lucan poverty texts. Before moving to the actual textual analysis, the reader is given a brief orientation to the socio-political and religious realities in Bolivia as well as a thick description of the two Pentecostal communities that participated in the empirical case study.

The second part of the book focuses on the Lucan poverty texts; thus, chapters 3–7 follow an identical format. In each chapter, the first section describes and analyzes the socio-economically marginalized and privileged Bolivian Pentecostal groups' readings of the Lucan passages. This is followed by a comparison of the groups' perspectives and interpretative processes. Finally, after a thorough presentation of scholars' exegetical views of the Lucan texts, the Bolivian readers' and scholarly readings are brought into a critical dialogue.

The third part focuses on bringing together the insights from the case study and the historical readings of Luke's texts. In chapter 8, the hermeneutical processes of the Bolivian readers' are analyzed, including the way the socio-economic status might have influenced their interpretations. This is followed by an attempt to indicate how and to what extent the Bolivian readers' views might be beneficial to historically oriented scholarly research. Finally, chapter 9 brings the study to a close with a reflective summary and the implications of the findings.

PART 1

Background and Methodology



Latin American Biblical Hermeneutics

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first gives an overview of Latin American liberation hermeneutics; the second presents Pentecostals' use and interpretation of the Bible. The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the reader to these two important hermeneutical traditions in Latin America and to lay a framework for understanding the case study in chapters 3–7.

1.1 Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics

The roots of Latin American liberation hermeneutics are often traced to the poor communities in various Latin American countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Despite these early beginnings, the first systematic elaboration of liberation theology is usually attributed to Gustavo Gutiérrez's book *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas* (1971). Nevertheless, the theology of liberation that Gutiérrez elaborated is, according to many, just a systematization of people's theology.¹

The people in the ecclesial base communities or *comunidades eclesiales de base* (CEBs), along with the various youth and student movements, are generally seen as the originators of the biblical hermeneutics of liberation in Latin America.² Its historical developments, however, include several overlapping reasons and historical forces, the first of which was the success of The Cuban Revolution in 1958, which demonstrated the possibility of overcoming imperialism, which in turn generated optimism in the socio-political realm in various parts of Latin America. Second, a number of oppressive regimes held power

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- 1 González and González, *Christianity in Latin America*, 254–255; Richard, “Lectura popular,” 30–31; Andiñach and Botta note that Rubem Alves used the concept “theology of liberation” already in 1969. See “Introduction: The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation: Worldwide Trends and Prospects,” in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (eds. P. Andiñach and A. Botta; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 2. Despite this general demarcation, some historians have seen historical precedents of liberation theology and its biblical hermeneutics in the person and work of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), the social gospel movement of Walter Rauschenbusch, and Negro spirituals (Andiñach and Botta, “Introduction,” 6–7).
 - 2 Nestor O. Miguéz, “Lectura latinoamericana de la biblia: Experiencias y desafíos,” *Cuadernos de teología*, vol. XX (2001): 77–80.

throughout Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to a yearning for liberation.³ Third, increasing poverty and misery of the masses, coupled with the failure of *desarrollismo* or developmentalism, fed emerging Marxist sentiments.⁴ Fourth, in the religious realm, the winds of renewal were blowing within the Catholic Church. Vatican II (1962) and the first two of the CELAM⁵ conferences in Bogota (1966) and in Medellín (1968) touched directly on the issues of poverty and injustice.⁶

The origins of the biblical hermeneutics of liberation are often traced to the CEBs in Brazil. There, the pastoral crisis or the lack of qualified clergy, as well as both the Protestant and communist threats, were catalysts for initiating experiments toward ecclesiastical changes in various dioceses in the late 1950s. One of these changes was the initiation of training programs for potential lay leaders.⁷ In Brazilian CEBs, the selection of lay leaders to conduct religious duties laid the foundation for the eventual fusion of religious and everyday communal affairs.⁸ The educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (1921–1997), with its emphasis on critical reflection and rejection of the traditional “banking method” of education, played an important part in “*conscientization*,” or awareness building of the communities.⁹ Carlos Mesters has stated that the Bible had long been captive to the hierarchy of the church, but now it seemed that the people had rediscovered it.¹⁰

The origins of the *lectura popular* (popular reading of the Bible) in the 1960s were oral and therefore largely undocumented. Nevertheless, Ernesto Cardenal’s book *Evangelio en Solentiname* (1975) reflects sentiments of the earlier popular reading of the Bible.¹¹ Further, Consuelo Arnaiz collected memories and conducted interviews about the CEB experiences in Colombia

3 Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America*, 258–263.

4 Ibid., 243–247.

5 CELAM stands for *Consejo Episcopal Latinomamericano* (Latin American Bishops’ Council).

6 Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America*, 258–267.

7 Andrew Dawson, “The Origins and Character of the Base Ecclesial Community: A Brazilian Example,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (2nd ed.; ed. C. Rowland; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 140–142.

8 Dawson, “The Origins and Character,” 140–142.

9 Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America*, 250–253.

10 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 7–8, 100–103.

11 Miguéz, “Lectura latinoamericana,” 77–99; Ernesto Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname* (Dos volúmenes; San José: DEI, 1979).

between 1978 and 2004.¹² A few years after the publication of Cardenal's Bible studies, Carlos Mester's *Flor Sem Defesa: Uma Explicação da Bíblia a Partir do Povo* appeared, which attempted to conceptualize and analyze the popular Bible reading processes.

The starting point of popular hermeneutics is the lived experience of the people and not the biblical text in contrast to Western academic exegesis, where the focus tends to be the text itself and the isolated individual with little connection to the community. In popular hermeneutics the life of the people means the daily struggles and experiences of poverty, suffering, and oppression.¹³ The interpretation of the people, however, does not rely on scientific methodology. Rather, it is characterized by imagination, intuition, and free association of ideas, where one idea, word, or symbol moves the discussion to the next without the necessity of strict logic or coherence.¹⁴ For example, during one of the Bible reading sessions of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55), the peasants of Solentiname focus on Mary, and one of them makes a comment: "I don't see why Mary has to call herself a slave. Yes, we need to be free!"¹⁵ This prompts other participants to reflect on the idea of Mary's slavery. As the discussion continues, thoughts, metaphors, symbols, and practical examples are brought forward using free association. After seven people have commented, no conclusion is reached and the discussion moves on.¹⁶

The Bible is part and parcel of people's everyday life in CEBs.¹⁷ The reading process involves the life of not only individuals but the whole community and aims to bring about socio-political and communal transformation.¹⁸ Religion and politics are natural parts of life, and there are no attempts to separate religion from other spheres of life. Mesters stresses three different dimensions that are essential in the hermeneutical process of CEBs.¹⁹ These are the pre-text of life, the context of the community's faith, and the actual text of the Bible. By itself, the text is unable to produce meaning that has relevance to the people.

12 Consuelo P. Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida. Lectura popular de la Biblia en las comunidades eclesiales de base de Funsarep. Sistematización (1978–2003)* (Bogotá: Editorial Códice, 2004).

13 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower* 58–69; Neftalí Vélez, "La lectura bíblica en las CEB's," in *Lectura Popular de la Biblia en América Latina, RIBLA 1* (1988), 8–9; Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*, 4–12.

14 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 93–95.

15 Cardenal, *El evangelio*, 23.

16 For a detailed presentation of the Bible study, see Cardenal, *El evangelio*, 23–30.

17 Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*, 10.

18 N. Vélez, "La lectura bíblica," 8–29; Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*, 4–12.

19 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 13–17.

The pre-text or the situation of people's suffering is the first dimension in the hermeneutical process. Closely connected to this is the community context. The context emphasizes the unity of people within a particular community who engage in a struggle for liberation. The pre-text and community context together refer to what is termed as the "locus" from which the biblical text is approached. This is a place of struggle, "captivity," and "journey."²⁰ The people's approach to the actual biblical text is characterized by its relevance for "today." There is less interest in knowing the historical or original meaning of the text, though in some cases it may be helpful.²¹ In people's exegesis, the theological meaning is not usually the focus, though it informs the reading process on a more general level.²² The focus is on using the Bible to interpret present life situations. The Bible is used as "an image, symbol, or mirror of what is happening now."²³ Thus, the Bible acts as a mirror for life; that is, people reflect on and compare it with their own life circumstances. This brings about a new discovery in identity, energizes transformation, and gives a renewed meaning for life.²⁴

An important aspect of the hermeneutical process is the idea that people become the "new subjects of history" who take initiative and responsibility for their own life and the hermeneutical process.²⁵ Whereas the meaning of the Bible and even people's identity had previously been imposed from above, now the people themselves are authors of their lives. Thus, the people engage in *lucha hermenéutica*,²⁶ in which they have to break out of the dominant interpretation and find meaning from the perspective of their own experience as the poor and oppressed people.²⁷ Pablo Richard has particularly sought to demonstrate that the people occupy a privileged hermeneutical locus by virtue of their socio-economic status. He states that "when God's poor people read the Bible . . . the text acquires a new meaning . . . This is what we call the spiritual meaning of the text." He adds, "This meaning profoundly transforms the text. It purifies it . . . from all ideological and idolatrous distortions of the dominant system."²⁸ Though it is not quite clear what Richard means by this

20 Ibid., 13–22.

21 This often presupposes that a priest or a catechist is present.

22 Most often the general theology behind the reading process is liberation theology in some shape or form, whether the theology is clearly articulated or not.

23 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 70.

24 Ibid., 101–103.

25 Richards, "Lectura popular," 31–36.

26 Hermeneutical battle.

27 Richard, "Lectura popular," 41.

28 Ibid., 46–47.

“purification,” it seems to point to new hermeneutical insights that somehow differ from the dominant interpretation of the Bible. He continues by listing several biblical books, such as Exodus, the prophets, Job, and Psalms that have now been rescued and transformed by the reading practices of the CEBS.²⁹

Through the process of becoming independent arbiters of their own destiny and biblical texts, people feel energized and transformed. This, in turn, leads to further action on behalf of the community. While many liberation theologians use social scientific analysis in the process of developing theology, at the popular level and especially among the pastoral agents, the See-Judge-Act³⁰ method has become prominent since the early 1970s.³¹

On a more scholarly level, the interpretation of biblical texts has been systematized more clearly and the hermeneutical process is better articulated. This can be summarized with three closely connected ideas common to liberation theology. First is the experience of oppression and poverty, from which emerges the ideas of “preferential option for the poor” and hermeneutics of suspicion. Second, in order to take proper action to transform societal structures, a socio-critical analysis has to be conducted. For this liberation, many theologians have turned to Marx for help, though the use of Marxist analysis seems less prominent in the recent works of liberation theology.³² Third, Christian salvation is worked out in history. It is not just otherworldly utopia

29 Ibid.

30 On the method, see Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America*, 250–253. The origins of see-judge-act most likely originated with the Belgian priest Joseph-Leon Cardijn (see Kari Latvus, *Arjen Teologia. Johdatus Kontekstuaaliseen Raamatuntulkintaan* [Helsinki: Kirjapaja, 2002], 39–40). The see-judge-act method is not limited to Latin America but is also used in South Africa by The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical & Theological Community Development and research headed by Gerald West and many others.

31 Cf. Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America*, 251–252. It is generally acknowledged that liberation theology includes three distinct levels: the ordinary parishioners, the pastoral agents, and the liberation theologians. The three levels work together in the project of liberation. See e.g., Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Como Hacer Teología de la Liberación* (Salamanca: Edición Paulinista, 1989), 21–23.

32 See Enrique D. Dussel, “Teología de la liberación y marxismo,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos fundamental de la teología de la liberación. I* (eds. I. Ellacuría and J. Sobrino; Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1990) 115–144, for various levels of engagement with Marx. For an example of Marxist analysis, see Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, 1–33, 201–292; José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in Revolutionary Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), 21–61. For a recent analysis of Marxism and liberation theology, see Denys Turner, “Marxism, Liberation Theology, and the Way of Negation,” in *Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (2nd ed.; ed. C. Rowland; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 229–247.

but breaks through to concrete historical reality.³³ Theology is considered to be the second act and includes praxis; that is, critical reflection on the action. Biblical exegesis is connected to this overarching hermeneutical process and cannot be isolated from it.³⁴ Hermeneutics of suspicion is employed to expose dominant biblical interpretations (past and present) as ideological constructs that maintain oppression and domination. Thus, the hermeneutical circle moves from the socio-political context of oppression to the text and back to life.³⁵

One example of the scholarly reflections of liberation hermeneutics is Clodovis Boff's study, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (orig. 1978), which criticizes the simplistic approach to the Bible that many of the popular and semi-popular readings have espoused.³⁶ In what Boff calls the "correspondence of terms" approach, the biblical story and its context are related to the present day situation with the assumption that the ancient socio-political context is almost identical to the present-day one. According to this model, the message of the biblical story can thus be transferred to the present day reality without much modification or reworking (see diagram below).

$$\frac{\text{Jesus}}{\text{His political context}} = \frac{\text{Christian Community (today)}}{\text{Its political context (today)}}$$

Instead of the "correspondence of terms" approach, he prefers "correspondence of relationships," which acknowledges the historical gap between the present and the past as well as differences in socio-cultural realities. Thus, the hermeneutical circle becomes dialogical rather than fixed.³⁷

Another important liberation theologian is José Severino Croatto, who has developed his hermeneutical ideas in several studies since his initial work,

33 Ignacio Ellacuría, "Historicidad de la salvación cristiana," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos fundamental de la teología de la liberación I* (eds. I. Ellacuría and J. Sobrino; Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1990), 323–372.

34 Boff and Boff, *Como Hacer Teología*, 43–54.

35 On the hermeneutical circle, see Juan L. Segundo, *Liberación de la Teología* (Buenos Aires: Lolhé, 1975), 13–14.

36 Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (trans. R. Barr; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books), 132–153; See also Christopher Rowland and Mark Christopher, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 52–65.

37 Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 146–153.

Liberación y Libertad: Pautas Hermenéuticas (orig. 1973, 1978). According to Nestór Míguez, he is the first scholar who explicitly combined the experience of political liberation with biblical theology.³⁸ In *Hermenéutica Bíblica: Para una teoría de la lectura como producción de sentido* (1984), Croatto develops his hermeneutical theory and builds on the ideas of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer, for example, by adding the concept of praxis.³⁹ Croatto's contribution is particularly important, since it led the way toward new hermeneutical developments in the later 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁰

As the title of his book implies, some of the basic assumptions of his hermeneutics are that readers produce the meaning of biblical texts due to the autonomy of the text and the polyvalent nature of language.⁴¹ Meaning is thus produced through a "cycle from reservoir of meaning to meaning closure and back again."⁴² This involves the movement from language to speech, and from text to (re)reading, as well as the antecedent movement from event to word. The process culminates in the written tradition and finally in the formation of canon and its subsequent (re)readings.⁴³ Each phase involves selection and interpretation as well as closure of meaning, which in turn leads to closure in the interpretative cycle.

Croatto emphasizes the "forward" momentum of the text as the most relevant part of the reading. Thus, though historically oriented exegesis of the text is important, it remains secondary. As such, the text opens up a "world" of possibilities, which the interpreter brings into harmony with their own "world." It is the task of the exegete to open up this world of possible meanings to present-day readers.⁴⁴ According to Croatto, the poor and the oppressed have historically had little access to the Bible, and thus their "world" has long been neglected in the hermeneutical process. Therefore, they need conscientization regarding the hermeneutical process and the chance to reread the Bible from their own perspective.⁴⁵

If Croatto's hermeneutical approach focuses on the polyvalent nature of the texts, other classical Latin American scholars stand more firmly in the

38 Míguez, "Lectura latinoamericana," 77–99; also Andinach and Botta, "Introduction," 3–6.

39 de Wit, *En la dispersión*, 222.

40 For more on Croatto's hermeneutics, see *Ibid.*, 218–232.

41 Severino J. Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as The Production of Meaning* (trans. R. Barr; MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1987) 10–24.

42 Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 40.

43 *Ibid.*, 13–35, 36–46.

44 Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 25–35.

45 *Ibid.*, 50–53.

modernist paradigm. This can be seen in the way they rely on the historical-critical approaches, even if they criticize the dominant western interpretations of the time. For example, José Miranda insists, “[S]ome day we will have to give up . . . the very common idea that . . . Scripture has various ‘meanings’ and that each adopts the one which . . . suits him best. Once we have established the possibility of different ‘meanings’, then the Scripture cannot challenge the West.”⁴⁶

As can be seen, Miranda’s hermeneutics stands in conscious opposition to the “west” as he understands it. According to Miranda, there is only one meaning in any given text and this can be recovered through scientific exegesis. If more than one meaning is allowed, it is susceptible to the whims of the interpreter. Thus, Miranda does not develop new exegetical methods but utilizes historical-critical methodology and relies on Marxist categories in his analysis.⁴⁷

After the initial excitement of liberation hermeneutics had waned in the 1980s, both in Latin America and in Western academia, some scholars opined that the liberation hermeneutics had “run out of steam.” After a short review of Latin American liberation hermeneutics of the 1980s, Anthony Thiselton concluded that “[n]o truly new dominant theme emerges, and the emphasis on the hermeneutical circle remains virtually the same.”⁴⁸ To support his conclusion, he also cites a few other scholars, such as Thomas Schubeck’s entry on “Liberation Theology” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. While there is some truth in Thiselton’s statement, he generally ignores the more recent developments of Latin American hermeneutics. He identifies the “fourth stage” (1993 onwards) of the liberation hermeneutics largely with postcolonial criticism.⁴⁹ While it is true that a postcolonial lens has been incorporated into the repertoire of recent Latin American approaches, it is just one of the critical angles of the readers, as can be seen below.⁵⁰

Another recent critic of liberation hermeneutics is R. S. Sugirtharajah. He states that liberation hermeneutics “largely falls under western academic syntax” and therefore has not been able to move beyond Western captivity. He also states that its political activism has been replaced by traditional concern for

46 Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, 36.

47 Ibid.

48 Anthony Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 271.

49 Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 272–277. He acknowledges here the inclusion of topics such as colonialism and ecology.

50 It is also true that colonialism and the domination of Latin American countries by various western countries in the past and present have been important themes from the inception of liberation theology (see Bonino, *Doing Theology*, 13–20).

“good works and charitable projects,” and that liberation theologians “homogenize the poor.”⁵¹ These comments hardly do justice to the diversity within the recent developments of liberation hermeneutics, as will be seen below.

Still, others in the West and in Latin America have argued for a sustained vigor of liberation theology.⁵² For example, Navia et al., compiled an important anthology on popular hermeneutics in Colombia in 2005.⁵³ In addition, two large Latin American commentaries on the Old and New Testaments respectively were compiled between 2005 and 2007.⁵⁴ Further, Míguez chronicles, albeit briefly, the historical developments of Latin American Bible reading upward until early 2000 and did not indicate any notions of waning.⁵⁵ Despite the optimistic comments, it must be acknowledged that there are others who acknowledge a degree of decline and lack of vigor in the practice of CEBs and theoretical developments of liberation theology in recent years.⁵⁶

Be that as it may, Míguez has highlighted the continuous changes and developments within the Latin American biblical scholarship, one of which was the launching of the journal *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latino Americana* (RIBLA) in 1988. This journal presents the newer trends within the Latin

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- 51 R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 203–243, 265–266; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2003), 160–177.
 - 52 Christopher Rowland, “Epilogue,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (2nd ed.; ed. C. Rowland; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 304–307, Míguez, “Lectura latinoamericana,” 77–99. de Wit makes critical remarks but does not indicate a crisis or waning (“‘It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!’ Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics Through the Eyes of Another,” in *The Bible and The Hermeneutics of Liberation* [eds. P. Andiñach and A. Botta; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009], 39–60).
 - 53 Carmina Navia et al., eds., *De memorias, preguntas y esperanzas. Discusión sobre hermenéutica bíblica popular* (Bogotá: dimensión educativa, 2005); see also, Consuelo P. Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida. Lectura popular de la Biblia en las comunidades eclesiales de base de Funsarep. Sistematización (1978–2003)* (Bogotá: Editorial Códice, 2004).
 - 54 Armando J. Levoratti et al., eds., *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Antiguo Testamento. Vol. I. Pentateuco y Textos Narrativos* (Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2005); Armando J. Levoratti et al., eds., *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Nuevo Testamento* (Kindle ed., Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2007).
 - 55 Míguez, “Lectura latinoamericana.”
 - 56 See also Enrique Nardoni, “Pasado, Presente y Futuro de la Teología de la Liberación,” in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Antiguo Testamento. Vol. I. Pentateuco y Textos Narrativos* (eds. A. Levoratti et al.; Navarra: Verbo Divino), 277–284. This was also related to me in the ecumenical center (ISEAT) in Bolivia.

American liberation hermeneutics by both Protestant and Catholic scholars. Early issues of the journal dealt with more traditional topics such as popular reading of the Bible, option for the poor, and violence and oppression. More recent issues include topics such as colonialism, indigenous, black and afro-Caribbean peoples, eco-feminism, and oppression of women.⁵⁷ Also, regarding exegetical methods, the field of biblical scholarship in Latin America has become extremely diverse.⁵⁸

Perhaps the clearest shift in Latin American biblical hermeneutics occurred in the mid-1980s with the emergence of *hermeneuticas específicas*, or special hermeneutics.⁵⁹ Just prior to this the initial vigor of the movement was lessening partially because the hoped-for structural changes in society had not materialized. Trends in ecclesiastical politics had also played a role.⁶⁰

Thus, according to Míguez, the earliest phase of liberation theology was followed by a more nuanced understanding of who were the “poor and simple.”⁶¹ It meant that perspectives such as race, ethnicity, and gender were incorporated into the category of the poor.⁶² This shift became to be known as the emergence of *hermeneuticas específicas*,⁶³ the focus of which listened to the voices of people who had hitherto not been heard, such as women, black, indigenous peoples, *campesinos*, children, and many others. These developments also led to the investigation and reflection of new themes in the Bible,

57 Corresponding RIBLA issues can be found in <http://www.centrobiblicoquito.org/index.php/ribla.html>. The most recent RIBLA issue that I have been able to find is #65, 2011.

58 A good example of this is the RIBLA issue #53, 2006, which focuses on Luke 1–2 (*Interpretación bíblica en busca de sentido y compromiso. Diversas aproximaciones de Lucas 1–2: Caleidoscopio de métodos, exégesis y hermenéutica*, RIBLA 53, San José: DEI, 2006). Methods range from the traditional historical-critical approach to socio-political, narrative, semiotic, inter-cultural, and Afro-feminist readings.

59 It is difficult to pinpoint an exact date for this new development. In Colombia, these trends have been variously traced to the year 1986 and then to the more concrete realization in the popular workshops in 1992 and 1993 (see Mario Peresson, “Metodología de la lectura popular de la Biblia. Aporte a partir de la sistematización de experiencias bíblicas populares,” in *De memorias, preguntas y esperanzas. Discusión sobre hermenéutica bíblica popular* (eds. C. Navia et al.; Bogotá: Dimensión educativa, 2005) 98–99; Anibal Cañaveral, “El irrumpir de las hermenéuticas específicas,” in *De memorias, preguntas y esperanzas. Discusión sobre hermenéutica bíblica popular* (eds. C. Navia et al.; Bogotá: dimensión educativa, 2005), 51; Navia et al., eds.; *De memorias*, 147–163); and similarly, Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*, 13–20. See also Richards, *Lectura popular*.

60 Cañaveral “El irrumpir,” 28–30; Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*.

61 Míguez, “Lectura latinoamericana,” 77–99.

62 For a brief example, see Boff and Boff, *Como Hacer Teología*, 39–42.

63 Cañaveral, “El irrumpir,” 27–68.

such as culture, violence, colonialism, immigration, ecology, masculinity, sexuality, and so on.⁶⁴ Even Pentecostal experience is mentioned among these new perspectives in passing.⁶⁵ Anibal Cañaverl has observed that each of these perspectives needs not only develop their own critical lenses but also the language to express their particular identity. Further, these new approaches are still incipient and need to further conceptualize and develop the approaches, including their exegetical perspectives.⁶⁶

Overall, the above-mentioned topics and concerns have a close connection to the emergence of global theologies of liberation around the world. Further, at this new stage, more attention has been paid to the problematic nature of some biblical texts, whether due to the implications of certain texts (e.g., women, slavery) for present readers or to their use in the history in Latin America.⁶⁷ This has led to the rereading of difficult texts from a broader

64 For the various perspectives, see Navia et al., eds., *De memorias*; Arnaiz, *Haciendo crecer la vida*; for distinct hermeneutics, see Anibal Cañaverl, *El escarbar campesino en la Biblia. Aportes para una interpretación campesina de la BIBLIA* (Quito: Verbo Divino, 2002); Josef Estermann, ed. *Teología Andina: El tejido diverso de la fe indígena* (Tomo I & II; La Paz: ISEDET, 2006); Pablo Richard, "Editorial" in *Biblia 500 años. ¿Conquista o evangelización?* *RIBLA* 11 (1992). Cited 7 April 2011. Online: <http://www.clailatino.org/ribla/ribla11/contenido.htm>. "Hermenéutica Bíblica india: Revelación de Dios en las religiones indígenas y en la Biblia (Después de 500 años de dominación)," in *Biblia 500 años. ¿Conquista o evangelización?* *RIBLA* 11 (1992). Cited 7 April 2011. Online: <http://www.clailatino.org/ribla/ribla11/contenido.htm> [indigenous religions and cultures]; Paolo Ayres Mattos, "El derecho de ser diferente," in *Mundo negro y lectura bíblica. RIBLA* 19 (1994). Cited 25 August 2013. Online: <http://www.claiweb.org/ribla/ribla19/el%20derecho%20se%20ser%20diferente.html>; Marcos, Villamán, "Editorial," in *Mundo negro y lectura bíblica. RIBLA* 19 (1994). Cited 25 August 2011. Online: <http://www.claiweb.org/ribla/ribla19/editorial.html> [black]; José Gabarrón, "El inmigrante en la Biblia," in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Antiguo Testamento. Vol. I. Pentateuco y Textos Narrativos* (eds. A. Levoratti et al. Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2005), 225–235 [immigration].

65 Cañaverl "El irrumpir," 57, 64, 66. See also, Violeta A. Rocha, "Sanidad de los cuerpos ¿Experiencia de Dios? Lecturas pentecostales de salud," in *Es tiempo de sanación! RIBLA* 49 (2004). Cited 15 July 2011. Online: <http://www.claiweb.org/ribla/ribla49/la%20sanidad%20d%20elos%20cuerpos.html>.

66 Cañaverl "El irrumpir," 29–46.

67 See Francisco R. Archila, "Hermenéutica y exégesis. Un dialogo necesario," in *Hermenéutica y exégesis a propósito de la carta de Filemón. RIBLA* 28 (1997). Cited 28 May 2012. Online: <http://www.claiweb.org/ribla/ribla28/contenido.html>; Elsa Tamez, "The Bible and the Five Hundred Years of Conquest," in *God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America* (eds. R. Kinsler and G. Kinsler. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005) 1–17; Jorge Pixley, "The Political Dimension of Biblical Hermeneutics," in *God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America* (eds. R. Kinsler and G. Kinsler. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005) 18–33.

canonical perspective. As a result, the concept of canon also has become a more porous issue.⁶⁸ As well, the disappointment of the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor and continuing oppression has led to the reflection on hope and the biblical theme of Exile.⁶⁹ Finally, the hope of liberation within the everyday experience (*hermenéutica cotidiana*) has been combined with the struggle for structural reforms.⁷⁰

Many of these new trends have also been incorporated into *lectura popular*.⁷¹ This is due to the fact that there is a fairly close connection between the CEBS, pastoral agents, and liberation theologians in many Latin American countries.⁷² It has not always been acknowledged, however, that Latin American liberation hermeneutics includes a variety of hermeneutical approaches, methodologies, and geographical foci.⁷³ For example, regarding philosophical paradigms, Croatto's creative use of Ricoeur's concept of "surplus of meaning" aligns him more with a moderate postmodern paradigm, whereas many early liberation theologians such as José Miranda insisted that texts have only one meaning; this clearly places him into the modernistic paradigm.⁷⁴ Thus, from early on, a variety of philosophical assumptions were present.

As indicated earlier, the emergence of specific or particularistic hermeneutics is perhaps the most important development in both the scholarly and popular hermeneutics of Latin America in the recent decades. As such, it has not changed dramatically the hermeneutical circulation of Latin American biblical hermeneutics (cf. Thiselton 2009) or brought about new exegetical methods. Rather, it has enabled a development of new hermeneutical perspectives and deeper hermeneutical reflection in light of changing circumstances and new challenges. Despite this, as de Wit has observed, there is no such thing as a Latin American exegetical method per se.⁷⁵ In this sense, liberation

68 Míguez, "Lectura latinoamericana," 77–99.

69 Ibid.

70 Míguez, "Lectura latinoamericana"; RIBLA 14 (1993) is dedicated to *hermenéutica cotidiana*.

71 See Navia et al. 2004; Arnaiz 2004.

72 This seems to be the case particularly in Colombia (see Navia et al., *De memorias*, 147–163; Aranaiz, *Haciendo crecer*. See also Elsa Tamez, "Leyendo la Biblia bajo un cielo sin estrellas," in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Nuevo Testamento* (eds. A. Levoratti et al. Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2007), Kindle loc. 854–869.

73 de Wit is a rare exception (see *En la dispersión*, 217–267; 9, "It Should Be Burned," 40). For a full treatment of various Latin American hermeneutics, see de Wit, *En la dispersión*, 217–267.

74 Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, 36.

75 de Wit, *En la dispersión*, 217–267.

hermeneutics remains in the Western “captivity” (cf. Sugirtharajah 2003), though Archila, Cañaveral, and others have indicated a desire to develop authentically Latin American exegetical perspectives to accompany the emerging special hermeneutics.⁷⁶ For this purpose, Archila mentions the importance of imagination, myths, symbols, and dreams in place of Western-oriented exegesis based on rationality and technical skills. Without trying to specify what it looks like in practice, he calls this new approach socio-symbolical exegesis.⁷⁷

In light of this, the greatest strength of Latin American liberation theology currently lies in the area of hermeneutics rather than exegesis proper, though the two are intrinsically connected. Thus, Elza Tamez prudently states that despite the importance of popular Bible reading approach, hermeneutics without exegesis remains rather impoverished.⁷⁸ The focus on the lived experience of ordinary people, interaction with biblical texts, and communal transformation is admirable, even if the relationship between Mester’s three hermeneutical components (text, pretext, context) remains vague.⁷⁹ In addition, CEBs hardly function in an ideal way, as even Mesters has indicated.⁸⁰ There seem to have been cases of fanaticism, authoritarianism, and other peculiar features in the life of at least some CEBs.⁸¹ Overt subjectivism may also lead to premature fusion of horizons or neglecting the text’s otherness. These influences make it difficult to allow the text to speak on its own terms, especially if it states things that are contrary to the community’s hoped-for expectations.⁸²

76 Cf. Archila, “Hermenéutica y exégesis”; Archila, “Imaginación y exégesis”; Cañaveral, “El irrumpir,” 44–47.

77 Archila, “Hermenéutica y exégesis”; Archila, “Imaginación y exégesis.”

78 Tamez, “Leyendo la Biblia,” Kindle loc. 857–881.

79 See de Wit, *En la dispersión*, 233–243.

80 See Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 90–155. He notes that his comments on the popular reading suggest that his reconstruction imagines an ideal popular reader than a practical reality (p. 90).

81 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, 90–155. See also Cecilia L. Mariz, *Coping with Poverty. Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Templeton University Press, 1994) 42–50, 61–80; de Wit, “It Should Be Burned,” 39; Míguez, “Reading John 4 in the Interface between Ordinary and Scholarly Interpretation,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible Amsterdam* (eds. H. de Wit et al. Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004) 334–373, mentions an early CEB experience where some indicated that the work of biblical scholar is “scholarly deceit”; that is, to be rejected outright.

82 See, for example, the difficulties of Solentiname peasants in reconciling Jesus’ saying that “you will always have the poor with you” in Matt 26:6–13 (Cardenal, *Gospel in Solentiname*, 204–209); cf. Brian K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation. Reorienting Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), Kindle loc. 590–608.

Despite this reality, and despite its shortcomings, the tripartite focus on people's experience of suffering, community context, and biblical text seems to be a good starting point for popular Bible reading practice. In this sense, the participation of biblical scholars and trained pastoral agents may function as a balance in the reading process, though liberation theologians have not clearly articulated the power dynamics between the three sectors.

With regard to special hermeneutics, it seems to be a promising trend as it attempts to include numerous new hermeneutical lenses under its umbrella; however, this also raises some questions. For example, is there enough openness to dialogue between the various new perspectives, as Navia et al., have suggested.⁸³ Or does it lead to a ghettoizing position; that is, to an unwillingness to listen to the critique from outside? What about when two or more perspectives compete in the community for the hermeneutical priority? Though in scholarly readings it might be possible to celebrate different perspectives, in a communal setting this might be more challenging. Is the eventual fragmentation of hermeneutical perspectives inevitable? Is it possible to include multiple hermeneutical perspectives into a communal reading? Some of these questions could also be posed in terms of shifting identities, changes in the community composition, or demographics. It also seems that as much as the specific hermeneutics try to accommodate a particular perspective, at the same time the particularity potentially excludes other segments within a larger community. The tightening particularity of special hermeneutics also raises the question about the role of the community to critically evaluate its own approaches and methods. After all, any community, including academia, is susceptible to self-deception unless it is open to outside influences.

Further, the role of the biblical text seems somewhat elusive, at least in some of the special hermeneutics. For example, there are two competing approaches in indigenous hermeneutics (*hermenéutica india/indígena*). One emphasizes the importance of the biblical texts, whereas the other sees the Bible either as unimportant or merely a tool of colonial oppression.⁸⁴ Thus, some indigenous groups have explicitly rejected the Bible.⁸⁵ Overall, in various special hermeneutics, the role of the text remains ambiguous and at times is overwhelmed by the contextual reflection.

83 Navia et al., "Hermenéutica bíblica," 146.

84 Nicanor Sarmiento, *Camino de la Teología India* (Bolivia: Verbo Divino, 2000), 92–104.

85 See, for example, the famous dictum delivered to John Paul II by some indigenous leaders in 1992. It stated that they wanted to return the Bible back to him because "in five centuries it has given us neither love, nor peace nor justice" (Richard, "Hermenéutica Bíblica india").

As mentioned earlier, Richard in particular has suggested the primacy of the poor as biblical interpreters. Yet, he does not articulate clearly how the experience of poverty and oppression give them this hermeneutical privilege or what it looks like in practice. After all, he acknowledges the various ideological and practical threats that come both within and outside the community.⁸⁶ It is certainly true that people who experience poverty as a daily reality may be able to criticize certain injustices in their local communities (and society) from different perspective than the affluent; whether that is also the case with biblical texts is less certain. Richard thus admits that for the popular reading to function properly and have its proper effects, it must not only be connected to the community but also to liberation theologians and the Roman Catholic Magisterium.⁸⁷ It seems thus that it is not the poor and oppressed per se who possess the privileged epistemological and hermeneutical positions; rather, it is a certain segment of the poor (those active in CEBS) together with the liberation theologians and under the auspices of the Catholic Church. It is this dialogical relationship that is more likely to have brought about the hermeneutical insights of liberation hermeneutics than the people's condition or experience as such.

Finally, Ivan Petrella has noted an important trend in his critical analysis of liberation theologies of the Americas. He notes that currently many liberation theologies do not focus on economic issues and poverty, as was the case earlier. Rather, many have turned into middle class reflection on topics that have little to do with poverty—somewhat akin to the topics covered by the special hermeneutics indicated above.⁸⁸ Without neglecting the important contribution of the new perspectives, this is a crucial note and needs to be kept in mind.

On a larger scale, it is essential to note that not all Latin American biblical scholars or popular religious groups favor liberation theology. In addition, many newer religious groups such as Pentecostals, (Catholic and Protestant) charismatics, conservative evangelicals, and other religious entities are blissfully ignorant of liberation hermeneutics and sometimes fundamentally opposed to it. For example, in my discussions with several conservative evangelical

86 Pablo Richard, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation: Theoretical Grounding for the Communitarian Reading of the Bible," in *Teaching the Bible. The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Politics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 272–282.

87 Ibid.

88 Ivan Petrella, "Globalising Liberation Theology: The American Context, and Coda," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (2nd ed.; ed. C. Rowland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 278–303.

scholars and pastors in eastern Bolivia,⁸⁹ many associated liberation theology with Marxist revolutions of the 1970s and 1980s, and mainly with neighboring countries, such as Peru.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, Pentecostal scholars and pastors in particular rarely write in the generally acknowledged academic journals of Latin America, and especially in Bolivia their scholarship is still emerging.⁹¹

Regarding popular hermeneutics, Míguez correctly notes that Latin American popular groups can no longer (perhaps ever) be reduced to CEBs but need to include the various Pentecostal, (Catholic and Protestant) charismatic, evangelical, and other popular religious groups.⁹² Nevertheless, due to the oral and fragmented nature of these groups (and for many other unknown reasons), there are too few studies addressing these types of popular Latin American hermeneutics or their use of the Bible. This is rather surprising in light of the explosive growth of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in recent years.⁹³ What makes this trend even more interesting is the fact that many of these groups have amassed large segments of their adherents from the poorest and most marginalized groups within the society.⁹⁴ Others are becoming

89 This may be because eastern Bolivia is dominated by the mestizo culture rather than indigenous culture as in the western part of the country.

90 At the same time, there were several CEBs that were active in the community and even in close proximity to some of the churches and institution that the individuals I talked to ministered.

91 In informal discussions, the vice-principal of the Universidad Evangélica Boliviana (Bolivian Evangelical University) mentioned that in-depth theological reflection is rare in Bolivia and theological journals do not exist among the conservative evangelicals. There are some exceptions to this; for some examples, see the works of Juan T. Chambe, "Tuve una importante revelación: Revelación en la experiencia evangélica andina," in *Teología Andina. Una tejida diversa de fe indígena* (Tomo 11; ed. J. Estermann. La Paz: ISEAT, 2006), 11–48; Juan T. Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal Popular. La fe en comunidades periurbanas y andinas* (Colección Teología y Filosofía Andinas, no. 6; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011).

92 Míguez, "Lectura latinoamericana," 77–99.

93 Bonino stated in 1995 that in many Latin American countries Pentecostals have reached 10% of the population and in some countries (Guatemala and Honduras) as many as 20–30% are broadly charismatics. See José Míguez Bonino, "Las iglesias protestantes y evangélicas en América Latina y Caribe: un ensayo interpretativo," *Cuaderno de teología* vol. xiv, no. 2 (1995): 37. While religious statistics always have an element of uncertainty, the above nevertheless gives an indication of the growth in the 1990s. For figures in the 2000s, see below.

94 See especially the interesting comparison between Pentecostalism and CEBs in Brazil by Cecilia Mariz. She argues that Pentecostalism is attractive particularly to the poorest of the poor, whereas CEBs attract the common poor and historical Protestant church the middle class (Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 153–156); see also Philip D. Wingeier-Rayo, *Where*

significant forces in society and wield influence among their adherents—at times by appealing to the Bible.

In light of the emergence of these popular movements within Latin America (and elsewhere), several questions arise. Why have scholars not been interested in understanding this type of popular hermeneutics and use of the Bible? Certainly, the sheer numbers of Pentecostals in Latin America would necessitate this. How do these new religious groups interpret and use the Bible in identity formation and to legitimize their existence? Can some of the approaches of these ordinary readers contribute to the scholarly study of the Bible in the same way as the early popular hermeneutics in liberation theology? Last and most important, what methods could be used to investigate popular hermeneutics and its use of the Bible? Before trying to address some of these questions, I attempt to paint a picture of one type of popular hermeneutics; that is, the Pentecostal/charismatic type. After all, this is the main focus of the case study in chapters 3 to 7.

1.2 Pentecostal Hermeneutics in Latin America

As is well known, Pentecostalism began in the early 1900s as a radical pneumatic movement of the poor and marginalized.⁹⁵ Though there is an ongoing debate among scholars whether Pentecostalism started in Topeka, Kansas, or Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in a matter of years the movement spread around the globe.⁹⁶ According to 2005 estimates of the World Christian Database, 28.1%

are the Poor? A Comparison of the Ecclesial Base Communities and Pentecostalism—A Case Study in Cuernavaca, Mexico (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 132–147. It is important to add that in recent decades Pentecostalism has also made many inroads into the so-called urban middle classes.

95 Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19–62; Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 47–78, 223–240; Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 19–40.

96 Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 18–24. The two figures generally seen as the founding figures of Pentecostalism are African-American William J. Seymour and white Anglo Charles F. Parham. Some scholars dispute whether Pentecostalism started in U.S. Rather, they opine that this new outpouring of the Spirit was experienced simultaneously in different parts of the world. See, for example, Juan Sepúlveda, “Indigenous Pentecostalism and the Chilean experience,” in *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on*

of Latin Americans identify broadly as Pentecostal or charismatic Christians. While the percentage varies regionally,⁹⁷ other sources give similar numbers.⁹⁸

In its beginnings in the U.S., Pentecostalism mostly attracted the lowest levels of the society and, in an era of segregation, its adherents proclaimed and practiced racial and social equality. As Walter Hollenweger writes, “[i]n the Los Angeles revival white bishops and black workers, men and women, Asians and Mexicans, white professors and black laundry women were equals (this in 1906!).”⁹⁹ Both the secular and religious press was reporting the strange phenomena and ridiculed the movement. After all, “[w]hat good can come from a self-appointed Negro prophet” they said.¹⁰⁰ Allan Anderson has emphasized the importance of eschatological hope that many marginalized and poor received and the experience of the Spirit that dissolved distinctions of race, class, and gender.¹⁰¹ Even if the social and racial equality was short-lived,¹⁰² it

a Movement in Transition (ed. A. Anderson and W. Hollenweger. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 111–134.

97 “Overview: Pentecostalism in Latin America.” Cited 11 November 2013. Online: <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/overview-pentecostalism-in-latin-america/>. The Pentecostal/charismatic movement is not limited to established and independent Pentecostal churches but also includes individuals from Catholic and Protestant groupings who identify with the charismatic experience or giftings. According to recent Pew Foundation survey some countries, such as Brazil and Guatemala, include the highest percentage of Pentecostal/Charismatics in Latin America. The figures indicate 34% and 40% respectively (Luis Lugo et al., *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, [2007], 4. Cited 12 April 2013. Online: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2006/10/pentecostals-08.pdf>). D. Barrett and T. Johnson (“Global Statistics,” NIDPCM, 284–302) state that in the year 2000 there were about 523 million Pentecostal/charismatic Christians in the world.

98 Barrett and Johnson’s statistics are similar—if the estimated population of 519 million in Latin America about 141 million (app. 27%) were affiliated with the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. See Barrett and Johnson, “Global Statistics,” NIDPCM, 284–302. See also <http://www.un.org/popin/popdiv/pop1999-00.pdf> for the U.N.’s total Latin American population index in the year 2000.

99 Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 20. It is important to note here that there were a number of Hispanics, especially Mexican immigrants, who were part of the Azusa street revival from the beginning (Edvin Villafaña, *Liberating Spirit: Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmann Publishing, 1993], 87–90).

100 Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism* 20.

101 Anderson, *An Introduction*, 60–62.

102 One of the major splits in early Pentecostalism occurred between Seymour and Parham. The former was unable to accept the equal participation of races in the services, while the latter endorsed it (Anderson, *An Introduction*, 39–62; also Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism* 20–24). In a matter of years of its inception, Pentecostal church authorities conformed to

made a lasting impact on the imagination of many and on the possibilities of the Pentecostal experience.

The early North American Pentecostals were not trained in seminaries or academic institutions. Their hermeneutical approaches were practical and pre-critical in nature. In the development of doctrine, they utilized a practical common sense Bible reading method. This essentially meant mining the biblical canon (in English) for references related to any given topic or concern and synthesizing it into a doctrinal statement.¹⁰³

The early Pentecostals adopted many of the hermeneutical practices from contemporary holiness movements, though they interpreted and used them from the perspective of their own religious experience.¹⁰⁴ One of the unique aspects of early Pentecostalism was the “Latter Rain” motif, which refers to an overarching hermeneutical story that divides history into three key segments.¹⁰⁵ The first includes the outpouring of the Spirit as recorded in the book of Acts (esp. Acts 2) upon the holy and sanctified church. This is followed by subsequent generations of believers wandering from the truth. The second important segment is the complete apostasy of the hierarchical Roman church from the time of Constantine onward. Though God preserved a persecuted “remnant” throughout the Middle Ages, it was only through the Reformation and especially through John Wesley that a new glimmer of hope emerged. Finally, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, along with the concrete manifestations of speaking in tongues, healings, and miraculous signs, indicated that the “Latter Rain” of the Spirit had been released. This signaled to the faithful that the second coming of Jesus was near. This Pentecostal narrative provided a hermeneutical framework for interpreting reality, including the entirety of church history.¹⁰⁶ The overarching “Latter Rain” story subsumed many other features under its umbrella, such as the restoration of the charismatic gifts (especially speaking in tongues) and the four-fold gospel of Jesus as the Savior,

the societal expectations and segregated into white and black denominations and congregations (Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 20).

103 Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic. Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, Tenn.: CPT press, 2009), 98–102.

104 Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 98–102.

105 The “Latter Rain” took as its starting point certain biblical texts (esp. Deut 11:10–15 KJV; also Job 29:29; Prov 16:15; Jer 3:3; 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1; Jam 5:7) and read the Palestinian geographical motifs of seasonal rains in a spiritualized manner (Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 136–137; see also Hocken, “Latter Rain Movement” NIDPCM, 830–833).

106 Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 156–161.

sanctifier, baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and the soon-coming King.¹⁰⁷ Thus, when Pentecostals read the Bible, they did so in light of this overarching story, and due to their social location, they read it as the “marginalized people of the ‘Latter Rain.’”¹⁰⁸

Due to the intense missionary activity of its adherents, the Pentecostal movement was transported early on to Latin America.¹⁰⁹ Despite the connection of the early missionaries to the U.S., Latin American Pentecostalism should not be considered as a North American creation or import.¹¹⁰ This is particularly the case with Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.¹¹¹ Rather, as Hollenweger and Juan Sepúlveda have argued, one reason for its growth has been “a search for indigenous Christianity” in Latin America.¹¹²

Though branches of Pentecostalism have taken on specific characteristics in different Latin American countries,¹¹³ they all emphasize the immediate experience of the Spirit.¹¹⁴ One can also find traces of the “Latter Rain” motif and the simple Bible reading method in many Pentecostal communities in various

107 Anderson, *An Introduction*, 225–235.

108 Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 160.

109 In early Pentecostalism, there were no mission agencies or official structures. Those who felt the prompting of the Spirit embarked on a mission field due to the urgency of saving souls and spreading the Pentecostal experience. A well-known example of this is two Swedish-American missionaries, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vigren. After receiving a prophecy from a fellow believer, they left to Brazil with only a few dollars in their pocket and no knowledge of the Portuguese language or Brazilian culture.

110 David Stoll discusses North American connection extensively in *¿América Latina se vuelve protestante? Las políticas del crecimiento evangélico* (trans. M. Carmen and C. Salvador; digital ed.; Abya-Yala, 1990), 80–92, 156–160.

111 Anderson, *An Introduction* 63–64.

112 Sepúlveda, “Indigenous Pentecostalism,” 112; Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 81–92.

113 Chile is a particular case in point. Chilean Pentecostalism originated in a Methodist church and it still accepts the 25 articles of the Methodist Episcopal Church as is—they practice infant baptism, and they use an adapted form of Methodist governance, manual of worship, and special ceremonies. They also do not subscribe to “initial evidence” doctrine according to which the reception of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is evidenced by the speaking of tongues (Sepúlveda, “Indigenous Pentecostalism,” 110–134; “Valparaíso, cuna del pentecostalismo chileno,” in *Voces del pentecostalismo latinoamericano 111. Historia, teología, identidad* [eds. D. Chiquete and L. Orellana, 2008], 17–42. Cited 30 August 2013. Online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/75771668/Pentecostalismo-Latinoamericano-111#page=17>.

114 Villafaña (*Liberating Spirit* 115–125) also emphasize how the Mexicans who were part of the Azusa street revival of the early 20th century understood the experience of the Spirit through the Hispanic culture and history.

part of the Latin America.¹¹⁵ For example, despite its disconnection with the Azusa Street Revival, its unique characteristics and Methodist origins, the early Chilean Pentecostalism emphasized the fervent expectation of the second coming of Jesus.¹¹⁶ The same is still true today of many Pentecostal churches and denominations in Bolivia and Peru.¹¹⁷

What Anderson says concerning global Pentecostalism in general seems to hold true of the movement in Latin America. Since “most Pentecostals rely on an experiential rather than a literal understanding of the Bible,” it is “not very meaningful to discuss the interpretation of the text alone.”¹¹⁸ Rather, exegesis or the engagement with biblical texts needs to be seen in a larger hermeneutical framework of Pentecostal theology and its worldview. As was pointed out earlier, the distinct experience of the Spirit was one of the hallmarks of early Pentecostalism. This is the case of Latin American Pentecostalism today as well, even if there is some variation in different socio-cultural and geographical areas how the experience of the Spirit is interpreted.

Regarding the hermeneutical process, the experience of the Spirit enables the Pentecostal faithful to appropriate the message of the Bible, especially that of healing, deliverance, and liberation for various personal and social ills. This experience is mediated through preaching, testimonies, prayers, prophecies, healings, and so on, rather than a strict exegesis of the text.¹¹⁹

115 See Jill M. Wightman, *New Bolivians, New Bolivia: Pentecostal Conversion and Neoliberal Transformation in Contemporary Bolivia* (UMI Microfilm; Ph.D. diss.; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: ProQuest, 2008), 219–229. Wightman notes that Matt 24:11 is often quoted to indicate the nearness of the Second Coming of Jesus; however, contrary to expectations, the perceived nearness of the End does not lead to withdrawal or passivity in the church or society. Quite the contrary, it provides an added impetus for personal and societal transformation through evangelism and other means. The faithful also see the local and global conflicts in light of biblical prophecies.

116 Sepúlveda, “Valparaíso,” 17–42; Miguel, Á. Mansilla, “Cuando el Diablo anda suelto: Las representaciones del mal en el pentecostalismo chileno, 1909–1938,” in *Voces del pentecostalismo latinoamericano III. Historia, teología, identidad*, 2008 (eds. D. Chiquete and L. Orellana.Mansilla, 2008), 75–101. Cited 30 August 2013. Online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/75771668/Pentecostalismo-Latinoamericano-III#page=17>.

117 See, for example, Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 22–24; José A. Watanabe, “Pensamiento pentecostal: Un acercamiento a la cosmovisión pentecostal,” in *Voces del pentecostalismo latinoamericano III. Historia, teología, identidad* (eds. D. Chiquete and L. Orellana, 2008), 145–146. Cited 30 August 2013. Online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/75771668/Pentecostalismo-Latinoamericano-III#page=17>.

118 Anderson, *An Introduction*, 226.

119 Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 114–207.

When a person is socialized into the Pentecostal community, s/he learns the ethos and worldview of the movement, which enables the believer to learn the hermeneutical practice of the community. In discussing Pentecostalism in Peru, José Watanabe points out the importance of revelation within the Pentecostal worldview. For Pentecostals, revelation is not a rigid depository of truths contained in the Bible; rather, the Bible is one of the sources of revelation, along with dreams, visions, prophecy, and so on, even if the latter are to be understood in light of the biblical revelation. Visions, dreams, and other spiritual phenomena are further fused with present-day cultural practices and select biblical images.¹²⁰

Though most Pentecostal denominations are vehemently opposed to indigenous religions of their given locale, they generally retain a close connection to their forms, even if not the content.¹²¹ For example, both in Pentecostal churches and the religious practices of the indigenous Aymaras, the blessing of a newly constructed house or a new car is a common ritual in Andean regions of Bolivia. At the same time, the use of either alcohol or coca leaves, which are integral parts of the ritual among the Aymaras, is strictly forbidden among the Aymara Pentecostal groups.¹²²

An important aspect of Pentecostal hermeneutics is the connection between the seen and unseen worlds. For a Western observer, the language of “above/below” or “spiritual/material” may suggest a rational disconnection between two realms.¹²³ For Pentecostal believers, however, the two are closely intertwined and organically connected to the extent that what happens in one has consequences in the other.¹²⁴ In Peruvian popular Pentecostalism, this is linked to a practical view of retribution that is entrenched in the spiritual mindset of the ordinary believers. Consequently, because the faithful receive

120 Watanabe, “Pensamiento pentecostal,” 150–151. See also Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*, 207–245.

121 Sepúlveda, “Indigenous Pentecostalism,” 129–130.

122 Chambe, “Tuve una,” 21–23. See Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 241–251 for other examples in Bolivian Pentecostalism. For a fascinating report of parallels between a radical Pentecostal revival and the tradition and practices of indigenous guaraní in the Chaco region of Bolivia, see Xavier Albó, “¡OFADIFA! OFADIFA! Un pentecostés chiriguano,” in *De indio a hermano: Pentecostalismo indígena en américa latina* (ed. B. Jiménez; Iquique, Chile: Ediciones Campus universidad Arturo Prat, 2005), 231–328.

123 According to Estermann (Josef Estermann, *Filosofía Andina: Un Vision para un Mundo Nuevo* [La Paz: ISEAT, 2006], 22–23), Western philosophical tradition is characterized particularly by dichotomies and universal comparisons, such as pure/impure, spiritual/material, mythos/logos, theory/practice, and so on.

124 Watanabe, “Pensamiento pentecostal,” 154–159.

rewards from God for practicing the good and misfortune for evil, they forge a close connection between socio-religious behavior, health, and well-being.¹²⁵ Sepúlveda notes a similar trend in Chilean Pentecostalism, observing that this is an important connection between primitive Christianity, Amerindian religion, folk Catholicism, and Pentecostalism. In Chilean popular Catholicism, the believer pleads to a local saint or virgin for healing for self or others by making a promise to perform a certain religious duty, such as pilgrimage or lighting a candle. If the request comes to pass, a failure to perform the promised duty is believed to result in negative retribution, such as contracting the illness anew.¹²⁶ Sepúlveda detects a similar pattern in the testimonies of Pentecostal healing. Prior to healing, the believer often made a promise to perform Pentecostal duties, such as evangelism, with fervor and diligence.¹²⁷

One of the characteristics of the Pentecostal movement around the world is its attraction to the poor masses.¹²⁸ Sepúlveda insists that, especially in its beginnings, Chilean Pentecostalism was not only a struggle for more indigenous Christianity but also a clash of social classes and mentalities.¹²⁹ It is instructive to note that the Presbyterians of the time were characterized as a cultured and open middle class people, whereas the Chileans and some Methodist missionaries were seen as uneducated and fanatical.¹³⁰ He further adds that the typical "Pentecostal client" in the 1930s and 1950s came from the poorest of the poor and was characterized by social exclusion, family problems, and alcoholism.¹³¹ Discussing the present-day Brazilian Pentecostalism, Cecília Mariz affirms, "Pentecostal churches recruit most of their members among the lowest stratum of the poor, many of whom are alcoholics or elderly . . . the economic situation of Pentecostals immediately before conversion tends to be the

125 Ibid., 157–159.

126 For a similar story in Brazil, see Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 38.

127 Sepúlveda, "Valparaíso," 129–130; similarly in Bolivia "healing requires commitment" (Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*, 79); however, Chambe lists numerous other reasons for contracting an illness and being healed in Pentecostal experience (Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*, 61–83, esp. 79).

128 The title of the d'Epinay's classic "Haven of the Masses" is instructive in this regard.

129 Sepúlveda, "Indigenous Pentecostalism," 111–134; "Valparaíso," 17–42.

130 Sepúlveda, "Indigenous Pentecostalism" 121–122.

131 Juan Sepúlveda, "Movimiento pentecostal y Teología de la Liberación: Dos manifestaciones de la Obra del Espíritu Santo para la renovación de la Iglesia," in *Movimiento pentecostal y comunidades de base en América Latina. La recepción de conceptos teológicos de liberación a través de la teología pentecostal* (Traducido por M. Fajardo, reelaborado por Daniel Frei, revisado por D. Chiquete. Weltmission heute; 39. Heidelberg: Universidad de Heidelberg, 2009), 107–108.

most precarious and unstable among the poor. [They] also tend to have more personal problems than those who engage in CEBs.”¹³²

One of the many reasons for Pentecostalism's attraction to the poorest has been its ability to offer immediate solutions to their problems.¹³³ The immediate experience of the Spirit brings a sense of hope into a hopeless situation and a perceived ability to take control of one's life.¹³⁴ The sense of newly found hope, healing, and release from shame is particularly attractive to the poor and those living in debilitating circumstances. As mentioned earlier, Pentecostalism also retains a much closer affinity to popular religion than the more rationally oriented CEBs. For example, Mariz observes that Brazilian Pentecostal adherents, including the leaders, take quite seriously the spirit world and its relation to healing and well-being, whereas CEB pastoral agents tend to disbelieve such phenomena.¹³⁵

Despite this close affinity with the dispossessed and marginalized, the new charismatics, sometimes referred to as neo-Pentecostalism, have attracted large numbers of university students, professionals, and segments of the middle class around Latin America.¹³⁶ This heterogeneous movement retains the Pentecostal belief in the powerful experience of the Spirit, including the manifestations of the miraculous. It is further characterized, however, by the megachurch concept and often a strong belief in material prosperity as a response to faith, generosity toward the church, and divine intervention.¹³⁷

132 Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 35–36.

133 Ibid., 31–80.

134 Sepúlveda, “Movimiento pentecostal,” 107–110.

135 Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 31–80. It is somewhat ironic that Pentecostalism, which emphasizes the individual's relationship with Jesus and personal transformation (e.g., Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 69; Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 19–24) has attracted so many of the poorest people, whereas CEBs that purport to opt for the poor seem to draw the poor who are “better off”. Concerning the situation in Brazil, Mariz states that “the Catholic church opts for the poor because it is not a church of the poor. Pentecostal churches do not opt for the poor because they are already a poor people's church” (*Coping with Poverty*, 68–80, esp. p. 80); for a comparative case study in Mexico, which reaches a similar conclusion, see Philip D. Wingeier-Rayo, *Where are the Poor?*, 116–150.

136 Miguel A. Mansilla, “El pentecostalismo clásico y el neopentecostalismo en América Latina,” in *fe y pueblo. Nada es imposible para Dios. Una ventana a la fe neopentecostal* (No. 18; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011), 6–22; Julio C. Villazón, “El movimiento neopentecostal en Bolivia: Crisis económica, reorganización simbólica y conservadurismo social.” in *fe y pueblo. Nada es imposible para Dios. Una ventana a la fe neopentecostal* (No. 18; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011), 23–34; Anderson, *An Introduction*, 63–82.

137 For a fuller treatment of typology within the Pentecostal-type churches, see Heinrich Schäfer, “La generación del sentido religioso—observaciones acerca de la diversidad

The use and interpretation of biblical texts needs to be seen within the larger hermeneutical framework. Since the Pentecostal movement includes a lot of variation as it comes into contact with different social locations and cultural expressions, the use and interpretation of the Bible will be sketched in broad terms. One of the limitations of current analysis is the scarce amount of research concerning the use and interpretation of the Bible among Latin American Pentecostals.¹³⁸ Daniel Chiquete, for example, noted as recently as 2010 that “a comprehensive and systematic study of this theme [Pentecostal biblical hermeneutics in Latin America] is an urgent requirement . . . [and] hopefully it will be realized soon.”¹³⁹ Further, many existing studies rely primarily on personal experiences, short reflections, and non-systematic participant observations or short interviews.¹⁴⁰ In the more systematic sociological

pentecostal en América Latina,” in *Voces del pentecostalismo latinoamericano III. Historia, teología, identidad* (eds. D. Chiquete and L. Orellana, 2008), 45–74. Cited 30 August 2013. Online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/75771668/Pentecostalismo-Latinoamericano-III#page=17>; Julio Córdova, “Evangélicos y proceso de desarrollo en Bolivia. Algunos consideraciones conceptuales,” in *Religión y desarrollo en los Andes. Deconstrucción intercultural de una relación difícil. Religion y desarrollo en los Andes* (eds. J. Esterman et al. La Paz: ISEAT, 2008), 79–112.

- 138 There is quite a bit of hermeneutical reflection on the scholarly level of Pentecostal hermeneutics in Europe and North America. Many also realize the gap between scholarly and popular (and pastors') hermeneutics and use of the Bible. See, for example, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making. On the Way from Fundamentalism to Postmodernism,” *JEPTA* XVIII (1998): 76–115 Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright, eds., *Spirit & Scripture. Examining a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (London: T&T Clark, 2012); Clark H. Pinnock, “The Work of the Spirit in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture from the perspective of a Charismatic Biblical Theologian,” *JPT* 18 (2009): 157–171; Andrew Davies, “What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?” *JPT* 18 (2009): 216–229; Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 172–211.
- 139 Daniel Chiquete, “Theological Education and Different Understandings of the Bible—Re-reading the Bible Today, Importance of Biblical Hermeneutics in TE,” 2010, 2. Cited 17 September 2013. Online: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ete/edinburgh-2010-study-group/theological-education-and-different-understandings-of-the-bible-daniel-chiquete/@@download/file/Daniel+Chiquete++Theological+education+and+different+understandings+of+the+Bible.pdf>.
- 140 See the following in various degrees: Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 17–24; Chiquete, “Theological Education,” 1–5; Yolanda Rosas, “Textos bíblicos en la celebración y teología neopentecostales. Una mirada crítica,” in *fe y pueblo. Nada es imposible para Dios. Una ventana a la fe pentecostal. Segunda época* (No 18; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011), 43–51; Lina Bustillos and Juan Tancara, “‘Lo más importante es la relación con Dios.’ Una experiencia

and anthropological studies, the use and interpretation of the Bible has been a secondary or embedded aspect rather than the main focus.¹⁴¹

The use and interpretation of the Bible in Latin American Pentecostalism has been associated with the experience of liberation and dignity from the beginning. Whereas the Bible was a sacred object in the Catholic Church, used almost exclusively by the magisterium and employed rationally and critically in the historic Protestant churches, Pentecostals were both excluded from and alienated by these practices. This sense of marginalization was connected to their social location and their peculiar socio-religious practices, which were considered irrational.

Sepúlveda has commented briefly how the Bible was used in early Chilean Pentecostalism, and some of his observations apply to present-day practices as well. Shoemakers, housewives, ex-alcoholics, and others often preached the Bible in public plazas with no formal education or social standing. To many marginalized people, this was a demonstration that the Spirit enabled them to read and understand the Bible without the hegemony of the clergy.¹⁴² It was often the first (and only) book that poor Pentecostals had, and many learned to read by it. This enabled a Pentecostal believer to say, "I am poor and have nothing but at the same time I have everything, since I have the Bible."¹⁴³ Thus,

de fe," in *fe y pueblo. Nada es imposible para Dios. Una ventana a la fe neopentecostal* (No. 18; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011), 35–42.

141 Lehman's important research focusses on religious transformation and popular religion in Brazil. Though he includes a section about the use and interpretation of the Bible, it only covers a mere ten pages out of 228 pages total. See David Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit. Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). Similarly Chambe (*Teología Pentecostal*) covers just over ten pages and some of the pertinent sections are scattered throughout the 253-page book. Wightman's anthropological study (*New Bolivians*) includes practical examples of the use of biblical texts throughout but includes little hermeneutical reflection. Many landmark studies on Latin American Pentecostalism hardly address the topic, especially as a separate category (e.g., d'Epinay; Stoll, *América Latina*; David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*; Richard Shaul and Caesar Waldo, eds. *Pentecostals and the future of Christian churches. Promises limitations challenges* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

142 Juan Sepúlveda, "Movimiento pentecostal y Teología de la Liberación: Dos manifestaciones de la Obra del Espíritu Santo para la renovación de la Iglesia," in *Movimiento pentecostal y comunidades de base en América Latina. La recepción de conceptos teológicos de liberación a través de la teología pentecostal* (traducido por M. Fajardo, reelaborado por Daniel Frei, revisado por D. Chiquete. Weltmission heute; 39. Heidelberg: Universidad de Heidelberg, 2009), 111.

143 Sepúlveda, "Movimiento pentecostal," 112.

when it was read through the experience of the Spirit, the Bible functioned as a tool to empower the community of the marginalized to regain their sense of dignity. The sacred “Book of God” had now become accessible to everyone.¹⁴⁴

Since for Pentecostals the Bible is not a locus of rational analysis as such but rather a place of personal encounter and experience, the faithful expect God to speak directly in and through it.¹⁴⁵ That is why it is common to hear Pentecostals citing loose verses from memory to address specific issues in personal and communal life. Any believer may expect any passage to speak to them and to their specific situation at any time.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Pentecostal believers are encouraged to “own” or appropriate by faith the manifold promises that they may find (or hear) in the biblical text. The obstacles for obtaining the fulfillment of these promises may be many but often are of a spiritual nature and can be overcome by faith.¹⁴⁷ This faith-filled attitude helps the believer to move actively toward a given goal and provides a sense of stability in the midst of debilitating circumstances of life.

Juan Chambe affirms that the Bible plays an important role in the healing practices of the Bolivian Pentecostals: “[t]he Word of God has power to heal. There are texts that bless the life of people, nourish, strengthen, [and] come close [to them]. The text alleviates pain because it consoles and brings hope.” Though this type of Bible-mediated healing mentioned by Chambe describes a gradual rather than sudden healing, the reading of the Bible needs to be done in faith both individually and in the community.¹⁴⁸

According to Chiquete, in their spiritual practices, Latin American Pentecostals aim to reproduce the healing accounts found in the Bible, especially those found in the New Testament.¹⁴⁹ Though Pentecostals do not utilize

144 This no doubt echoes similar sentiments when Protestants made the Bible available to the masses in the continent in the first decades of the 1800s. The Protestant pioneer James “Diego” Thomson had substantial success in distributing Bibles in Latin America in the first decades of the 1800s (González and González, *Christianity in Latin America*, 206–239).

145 Chiquete, “Theological Education,” 2.

146 Ibid., 1–5.

147 Watanabe, “Pensamiento pentecostal,” 158–159.

148 Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*, 76. Some of the specific texts that Chambe mentions are Jam 5:14–15; Ps 103:2–3; Isa 53:3–5; Matt 8:16–17. Wightman (*New Bolivians* 2008, 114–165) also argues that healing among Pentecostals in Bolivia refers to more than just physical cure. It is a metaphor that includes physical and spiritual well-being and deliverance from sickness, addictions, poverty, and other ills.

149 Daniel Chiquete, “Healing, Salvation, and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism,” *IRM* 93 (2004): 476–477. It is not exactly clear what Chiquete means by “reproducing the biblical healing accounts.” Presumably, he refers to the fact

the latest tools of biblical criticism, they seem to have a direct and intuitive understanding of the healing accounts of the Bible. This is due to the connections between their own context and that of the Bible. Not only do many live in poverty and tangible want, where access to modern medicine is practically absent, the healing practices of Pentecostal communities and folk healers are often the only avenues for improved health.¹⁵⁰ It is unfortunate, however, that Chiquete does not give a specific example of how the intuitive understanding of the biblical healing accounts might function in a particular text.¹⁵¹ Further, healing in Pentecostal theology is more than an absence of physical illness, as it generally is in Western medicine, because it also includes physical, spiritual, material, and social dimensions.¹⁵² This sort of holistic healing certainly resonates with the practices and accounts found in the gospel narratives and Acts.

Since there is a strong emphasis on appropriation by faith, the Bible also gains a status as a sacred object. It is not only quoted, memorized, and carried along to church meetings; it is also believed to ward off evil and protect believers from various maladies, at least in parts of Bolivia and presumably elsewhere.¹⁵³ Chambe informs that some Bolivian Pentecostals place it under their pillows to ward off bad dreams; it is sometimes used to hit somebody on the head in order to cast out demons, and it is placed in a central place in a house to ward off thieves and other dangers. The believers may thus exhort one another: "Brother, carry the Bible wherever you go [and] it will protect you."¹⁵⁴

Another common use of the Bible is in the Pentecostal testimonies; that is, when a person publicly (or privately) relates a short narrative account of God's blessing or faithfulness in the personal or familial experience. Biblical texts can be read prior to the testimony and often sections are either quoted from memory or alluded to, to make a connection with the healing or other

that Pentecostals believe in faith healing and some of their practices mimic the ones found in the biblical stories. Since the biblical healing stories are manifold and reflect a variety of practices, however, it is difficult to know to which ones Chiquete particularly refers.

150 Chiquete, "Healing, Salvation," 476–477.

151 I will relate an incident of this sort of intuitive understanding of one biblical healing account that I recorded during my case study. See more on p. 161.

152 Chiquete, "Healing, Salvation," 474–485. See also Wightman, *New Bolivians* 114–164. She also mentions how the Bolivian Pentecostals use the metaphor of healing for the improvement of the entire nation by citing 2 Chr 7:14.

153 Lehman (*Struggle for the Spirit* 173–182) sees a similar possibility in Brazil but leaves the question open.

154 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 192; similarly Chiquete, "Theological Education," 1–2.

type of blessing that has been obtained.¹⁵⁵ Thus, there is a direct existential connection between the biblical text and the experience of healing or deliverance in the lives of the Pentecostal believers.¹⁵⁶ Cheryl Johns illustrates well the heart of Pentecostal testimony: "With their...testimonies they make sacred history; they announce...critique...bless and curse. *Campesinos* and *campesinas*...[and] textile workers can express their own 'magnificat' which announces the dethronement of the worldly powers and the beginning of the new era."¹⁵⁷

The testimony also functions as an authentication of the Bible's message of the God who is present in the suffering of the people through healing and deliverance. In testimonies, the horizons of the present-day narrative of healing and the message of biblical healing stories fuse and blend into a new discourse of salvation and liberation. Sometimes, this also includes an explicit or implicit critique of the corrupt and immoral practices of the powerful or the present state of things within the society or the Pentecostal community.¹⁵⁸

The Bible also plays a central role in the preaching and teaching of most Pentecostal congregations. Though it is generally believed to be the Word of God in a very literal sense, and as such carries sacred authority, it is generally used in a more dynamic way than in conservative or fundamentalist churches in Europe or North America.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, David Lehman is correct when he discusses Brazilian Pentecostalism and states that the Bible is often harnessed rather selectively to support a moral or doctrinal position. The preachers commonly use "epic figures" (e.g., Abraham, David, Peter) to enable the faithful to identify with the victories and failures of biblical characters to draw lessons on morality and daily life.¹⁶⁰ Lehman, however, demurs the "anti-intellectual" stance of the Pentecostals, though at the same time, he admits that Latin American Pentecostals lack a professional guild of biblical interpreters. He highlights the use of metaphors, and symbolic and esoteric language, and concludes that "[i]n Pentecostal discourse, biblical texts are a combination

155 See examples in Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 114–165, esp. 143; also Chiquete, "Theological Education," 4; Anderson, *An Introduction*, 227.

156 Chiquete, "Theological Education," 2.

157 Cheryl B. Johns, "Pentecostales y la práctica de la liberación: Propuesta para una formación teológica subversiva" in *Movimiento pentecostal y comunidades de base en América Latina. La recepción de conceptos teológicos de liberación a través de la teología pentecostal* (Traducido por M. Fajardo, reelaborado por Daniel Frei, revisado por D. Chiquete; Weltmission heute; 39. Heidelberg: Universidad de Heidelberg, 2009), 141.

158 Cf. Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 129–132, 141–143.

159 Anderson, *An Introduction* 226–226.

160 Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit* 173–182.

of cautionary tales, moral fables, and prescriptive pronouncements.”¹⁶¹ While one might overlook his somewhat pejorative rhetoric, it is surprising that, apart from the positive appraisal of the verbal performance of some TV preachers, he finds little to commend in the Pentecostal usage of the Bible. For example, he does not mention how the Bible is used in healing practices and testimonies, nor how the Bible or its message may engender hope in the midst of social marginalization or personal chaos. He also does not consider whether the use of the Bible in moral exhortation or sermons functions in a positive or constructive manner in the Pentecostal worldview or discourse, or how the Bible and its use and interpretation might fit into a larger framework or discourse.

Nevertheless, as Lehman and others have commented, Pentecostalism in its popular form employs a sort of a-critical and (selectively) literalist interpretation of the Bible. The Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* is used in a largely ahistorical manner. Texts are not seen primarily as anchored in historical reality but read existentially and through the lens of experience.¹⁶² Further, there is little conscious emphasis on the literary genre or a historical or cultural gap between the present-day socio-economic realities and that of the biblical texts. Many Pentecostals across Latin America also use the archaic Reina Valera version in its 1960 revision.¹⁶³

Chambe has related how Pentecostals in the Andean region of Bolivia interpret the Bible. According to him, the Bible in one sense is difficult to understand for ordinary believers since it was written in a different culture and time, but on a deeper spiritual level it is easy to comprehend.¹⁶⁴ This is because “[t]hrough it God calls us to repentance and conversion, to stop doing evil and begin to do good.”¹⁶⁵ Many ordinary believers do not understand its historical meaning, yet it provides answers to life’s existential questions. In conjunction with the experience of the Spirit, it helps readers to understand the meaning

161 Ibid., esp. 175.

162 Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit* 173–182; Anderson, *An Introduction*, 225–234; Chiquete, “Theological Education” 1–5; Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 190–197; Watanabe, “Pensamiento pentecostal,” 145–160; Sepúlveda, “Movimiento pentecostal,” 104–117; Bustillo and Tancara, “Lo más importante,” 35–42; Rosas, “Textos bíblicos,” 43–51.

163 Chiquete, “Theological Education,” 1–5.

164 Chambe’s statement seems to indicate that most ordinary Pentecostal Bible readers do realize that there is a sort of historical and cultural distance between biblical stories and their present-day experience at least to some degree (“Tuve una,” 11–48; “Theological Education,” 1–5).

165 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 190.

of life and how to live a good life.¹⁶⁶ It also speaks to life's immediate concerns with a message of comfort, strength, encouragement, and instruction. Thus, "[t]he Bible has a message for us today and that is what we need to discover with the help of the Lord."¹⁶⁷

Though the Pentecostal approach to the Bible is in principle a-critical and (selectively) literalist, many believers and preachers freely utilize allegory, typology, and even numerology to playfully interpret the texts.¹⁶⁸ Thus, it may seem opportunist at times when some texts are taken with strict literalness while others are freely spiritualized or allegorized. This can even change from day to day or moment to moment;¹⁶⁹ Chambe talks about a "play" between the literal and non-literal interpretation.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the focus of the interpretation or reading remains on the life of the ordinary believer, individually and in the community.¹⁷¹ This forms a dialogue between the text and lived life experience. It is the belief in the guidance and illumination of the Spirit that helps individuals and the community to arrive at the correct meaning at the correct time.¹⁷² Further, the doctrinal formulations and communal discernment help draw boundaries around the otherwise free use and interpretation of the text.¹⁷³

In many regions of Latin America (and also Africa), the text of the Bible is often heard as well as read. Oral/aural mode and narrative theology are thus important aspects of Pentecostal hermeneutics, especially in places where people are illiterate or semi-literate.¹⁷⁴ This is also one of the reasons why the narrative accounts (stories from Old Testament, gospels, and Acts) often take precedence over the epistles and law in Pentecostal preaching and exhortation.¹⁷⁵ Before making a brief analysis of Latin American Pentecostal hermeneutics, it is important to note a few peculiar aspects of neo-Pentecostal churches and their use of the Bible.

It is true that the line between so called classical Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism is blurred. For the sake of simplicity, the former are defined as

166 Ibid., 220.

167 Ibid., 191.

168 See, for example, Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 173–182; See examples in Wightman, *New Bolivians* 214–246.

169 Chiquete, "Theological Education," 2–4.

170 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 196.

171 Sepúlveda, "Movimiento pentecostal," 112–113.

172 Chiquete, "Theological Education," 2–3.

173 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 194–197.

174 Cf. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 18–19.

175 Chiquete, "Theological Education," 1.

those churches that can be traced to the Azusa Street Revival or its close offspring. This includes denominations such as Assemblies of God (A/G), Church of God (Tennessee), the Four Square Church, and the like, all of which have a strong presence in Latin America. The origins of the so called neo-Pentecostal churches are more elusive, although they generally are connected to the charismatic revival of the 1960s in U.S.¹⁷⁶ The most famous example of this strand is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil (UCKG) as well as the manifold mega-churches in the U.S., Latin America, and other parts of the world. It is to be noted that there are numerous independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches in practice that do not fit squarely into either category.

What has been mentioned regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics and use of the Bible applies more to the classical Pentecostal movement, though it finds many points of contact within the variety of neo-Pentecostalism as well, particularly in the realm of healing and miraculous. To distinguish broadly between the two movements, a few pertinent hermeneutical emphases of neo-Pentecostalism in Latin America will be noted.

Lehman's report of the differences between A/G and UCKG in Brazil are a good starting point. He notes the more developed institutional organization of A/G. Its use of biblical texts is also more complex than UCKG's. He further notes that both the sermons and ordinary believers reflect a deep familiarity and respect toward the biblical texts and stories in A/G.¹⁷⁷ In contrast, in UCKG, this intimate knowledge of biblical stories is missing and texts are often "used in a casual, almost incidental way, as a point of departure or inspiration." There is hardly any exegesis of the texts and quotations of the Bible are approximate and spoken from memory.¹⁷⁸

Others point out a clear difference between neo-Pentecostals and classical Pentecostals in that the former interprets the Bible in a subjectivist-symbolical manner, whereas the latter employs a more literalist hermeneutic. That is, neo-Pentecostals are free to state, for example, "Jesus showed me through this text—," whereas classical Pentecostals would affirm the formula "the Bible says—."¹⁷⁹ Though in reality the two approaches are certainly intermixed in

176 Anderson, *An Introduction*, 144–165.

177 Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 172–176.

178 Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 176. See also Juan J. Chambe, "Forjando un paraíso. Las posibilidades del neopentecostalismo (apuntes)," in *fe y pueblo. Nada es imposible para Dios. Una ventana a la fe neopentecostal* (No. 18; La Paz, Bolivia: ISEAT, 2011), 60–70.

179 Córdova, "Evangélicos y proceso," 94; Beatriz H. Castillo, "Las comunidades religiosas neo-pentecostales," in *Identidades y religión. Fiesta, culto y ritual en la construcción de redes*

both strands of Pentecostalism, the division points to a general, albeit simplified, tendency in each movement.

Another important feature of neo-Pentecostal trait is the belief in abundant material prosperity that God grants to believers in response to faith, self-effort, and generosity.¹⁸⁰ This is something that the A/G denomination directly opposes, though it endorses a general idea of God's blessing and a more modest prosperity.¹⁸¹ Whereas classical Pentecostalism at times sanctified poverty and identified with images such as "depreciated and abandoned," or "people in Babylonian captivity," the neo-Pentecostal use of biblical imagery conveys a more optimistic outlook vis-à-vis their status in society and material prosperity. Thus, the faithful are taught to think of themselves as "kings and priests," "sons of the Most High," "princes of the kingdom," and "winners"; they are also called to transform and conquer the world.¹⁸² It is hardly surprising that many neo-Pentecostal churches have attracted people from the upwardly mobile middle class.

It is a common practice in neo-Pentecostal churches that the believers are asked to contribute not only the traditional tithes (10% of one's income) but additional contributions over and above (known as "offerings"), which God will reward with abundant material blessings.¹⁸³ The appeal is often made to biblical figures such as Abraham, Solomon, Job, Daniel, and to the covenant blessings in Deut. 27–28 (esp. 28:12), Mal. 3:10 and elsewhere in the Bible to support the notion of prosperity.¹⁸⁴ The biblical metaphor of "sowing and reaping" (shorthand for giving to God, i.e., the church), and the subsequent reception of material rewards are found throughout Latin America.¹⁸⁵ As a

sociales en la ciudad de El Alto (ed. G. Guyagya; La Paz: t'ika & teco, 2008), 82–83; Chambe, "Forjando un paraíso," 60–70.

180 Eloy H. Nolivos, "Capitalism and Pentecostalism in Latin America: Trajectories of prosperity and Development," in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 98–102. Mansilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico," 6–22.

181 Nolivos, "Capitalism and Pentecostalism," 98–102.

182 Mansilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico," 9–13; Chambe, "Forjando un paraíso," 60–70.

183 In Bolivia, see Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 101–112; in Brazil, Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 203–209; more generally, see Mansilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico," 6–22.

184 Rosas, "Textos bíblicos," 48–50; Mansilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico," 13–15.

185 Cf. Jonathan L. Walton, "Stop worrying and start sowing: A Phenomenological Account of the Ethic of 'Divine Investment,'" in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 107–129. The origins of the "law of sowing and reaping" or the "positive confession," are usually traced to a Baptist pastor E. W. Kenyon (1867–1948) in U.S. It

result, poverty and illness are sometimes considered negatively and, in more extreme cases, as sin.¹⁸⁶

Having said all this, it is important to note that the neo-Pentecostal movement also includes a lot of variety and it cannot be neatly defined.¹⁸⁷ Though neo-Pentecostalism is often characterized by colossal temples, TV stations, and wealthy leaders who appeal to the masses of poor, the reality is more complex and varied than this simple dichotomy allows. For example, despite all of its critics, UCKG offers practical help and common sense teaching on upward mobility to the poor. It has furnished actual upward mobility for at least some in Brazil.¹⁸⁸ Both classical and neo-Pentecostal churches are ready to affirm that “the love of money” is the root of all evil (cf. 1 Tim 6:10). The former emphasizes its dangers, whereas in the latter it is implicit, and a greater emphasis is placed on the “reception of God’s blessing to bless others.”¹⁸⁹ That is, God blesses one with material blessings in order to share it with others, though generally the giver grows in possessions as well. Another important aspect of neo-Pentecostal emphasis on prosperity is its holistic vision of salvation. They generally do not see economic blessing as a separate category but rather as an integral aspect of salvation. Classical Pentecostal groups tend to make a somewhat clearer separation, although they, too, see continuity between the two to some extent.¹⁹⁰

The above analysis has indicated that use and interpretation of the Bible in Latin American Pentecostalism is not a homogenous enterprise—nor is

was subsequently adopted by Pentecostal evangelists William Branham and Oral Roberts, from whom it was passed to popular TV evangelists such as Kenneth Copeland, Frederick Price, Benny Hinn, and many others (Anderson, *An Introduction*, 157–158).

186 Mansilla, “El pentecostalismo clásico,” 15–16; Wightman, *New Bolivians* 140, 143–155.

187 For different expressions of prosperity theology around the world, see Yong and Attanasi (2012). According to Villazón’s (2011, 28–30) typology there are four distinct types of neo-Pentecostal movements in Bolivia. They range from UCKG to restoration movements in Baptist and Anglican movements. Catholic charismatics should be added, but they are outside the purview of his typology.

188 Eloy H. Nolivos, “Capitalism and Pentecostalism in Latin America: Trajectories of prosperity and Development,” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 98–100; Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 203–209; See also Waldo Cesar, “Daily Life and Transcendence in Pentecostalism,” in *Pentecostals and the future of Christian churches. Promises limitations challenges* (eds. R. Shaul and W. Cesar; Grand Rapids. Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 22–31.

189 Nolivos, “Capitalism and Pentecostalism,” 100.

190 Nolivos, “Capitalism and Pentecostalism,” 100–101; Chiquete, “Healing, Salvation,” 474–485.

it possible to separate exegesis from the larger hermeneutical framework. Yet, despite the differences, it is possible to detect some basic tenets in the hermeneutical processes that are shared by all or most Pentecostal movements; one of the most obvious is the profound experience of the Spirit that frames Pentecostal hermeneutics and interpretation of the Bible. The context-specific, socio-cultural, and denominational connections influence the other pole of the hermeneutical framework.

Many Latin American liberation scholars and western critics have lamented the ahistorical and literalist interpretation by the Pentecostals. While it certainly has led to strange emphases and odd interpretations, literalism as such is often rather selective and dynamic. Despite this relative dynamism, it is undeniable that the Pentecostal's use and interpretation of the Bible has been used to perpetuate social ills, such as socio-political *status quo*, *machismo*, and oppression of women.¹⁹¹ Chiquete has mentioned the possibility of stagnation of the early dynamism in the use of biblical texts that has led to more rigid literalism.¹⁹² At the same time, the Bible has also helped curtail excessive and dangerous charismatic practices in some Pentecostal communities.¹⁹³ There

191 See, for example, Lehman (*Struggle for the Spirit*, 173–182) notes for example how the subjugation of women is sometimes justified by using biblical texts and how a first-century dress code is sometimes imposed on women based a few select verses. On siding with status quo of oppressive regimes in Latin America, see Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 208–214. Others see a close connection with Pentecostal individualism, prosperity, and global capitalism. This is probably the case in certain locations and with some congregations but should not be generalized. See, for example, Daniela C. Augustine, “Pentecost and prosperity in Eastern Europe: Between Sharing of possessions and accumulating personal wealth,” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 189–212; Andrew R. Chesnut, “Prosperous Prosperity: Why Health and Wealth Gospel is Booming across the Globe,” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 215–223; Frank D. Macchia, “A Call for Careful Discernment: A Theological Response to Prosperity Preaching,” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 225–237.

192 Chiquete, “Theological Education,” 1–5.

193 For example, in a remote area of Chaco, Bolivia, an extreme Pentecostal revival broke out in 1987. The two principal leaders of the movement proclaimed to be as “God” or “sent by God” (differing reports) and as the “prophet Elijah.” They declared that the Final Judgment would occur on March 12, 1987. In addition to causing physical harm to some, the leaders exhorted people to start selling their few meager possessions in order to prepare for the coming rapture. Needless to say, the event and its aftermath caused much

are other cases, such as the biblical healing narratives, in which the literalist interpretation facilitates potentially liberating practices in the life of the individual and the community.

The Pentecostal worldview, which is in certain aspects similar to the Latin American popular religions, presupposes the connection between spiritual and material worlds.¹⁹⁴ There seems to be less need to separate horizons, since healings and deliverances are part and parcel of Pentecostal experience as it was in the biblical world. This connection between the Pentecostal and popular religion, on the one hand, and the biblical world on the other, may explain why some Pentecostals have an intuitive grasp of some of the biblical texts without the tools of modern biblical criticism. Yet, the very nature of a-critical appropriation undoubtedly carries with it dangers when applied to practices that belonged exclusively to the first-century Mediterranean world. It remains to be seen how the large Pentecostal denominations will respond if secularism will increase significantly in Latin America; or what a new set of educational opportunities or the emergence of a larger body of Pentecostal biblical scholarship in Latin America might mean to the Pentecostal worldview and hermeneutics.

harm, and eventually the police suffocated the movement. Even as the evangelical and Catholic CEB groups quickly dismissed the movement, however, a number of Pentecostal leaders and believers (both A/G and independent) eventually distanced from the movement, since it contained extreme aspects that were considered to be “contrary to the Bible.” As such, initially it was not at all obvious that the “Spirit-led” practices of the group, such as healing, prophecy, and expulsion of demons, which turned extreme and excessive, were to be rejected by the other Pentecostal groups (as it was for the evangelical and Catholic groups). The whole story is related by Albó, “¡OFADIFA!,” 231–328, esp. 262–265 and 320–324. Unfortunately, the report does not tell which sections or passages of the Bible were used and how by the Pentecostal groups to reject the movement. One of the reasons why the Pentecostal leaders rejected the movement was because the prophets claimed that “there is no need for the Bible”; they asserted that they can talk to God as via telephone. This was too much for the other Pentecostal groups.

- 194 Mariz offers some of the similarities and differences between Pentecostals, Afro-Brazilian religions, and CEBs in *Coping with Poverty* (see also Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 61–82; cf. Estermann, *Filosofía Andina*, 252–275). To relate some examples, Pentecostals and Afro-Brazilian spiritists both consider the experience of miraculous and supernatural as important part of their life; both also tend to link the miraculous with a sense of empowerment and dignity in the midst of poverty and difficult situations (Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 131–148). One of the differences between the Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religion is that the former emphasizes a strong conversion experience, whereas the latter sees their religious affiliation as something innate (Mariz, *Coping with Poverty* 131–137).

Having said all this, the experientially-led Sprit hermeneutics seems to fit the Pentecostal worldview and appears to bring at least some benefits to the Pentecostal believers when viewed within the larger framework. While some Western academic scholars and Latin American liberation theologians have been disturbed by the (selective) biblical literalism (and Pentecostal worldview as such) and lack of historical rootedness,¹⁹⁵ one might wonder how a method that is rooted in the Western Enlightenment worldview might benefit a Pentecostal believer struggling with poverty and marginalization? To what extent and in what way is historical or literary reading—of the Western academic sort—is necessary or desirable for Latin American (or African) Pentecostal believers? This is not to say that Western academic methods could not contribute anything. In Pentecostalism, it is the presence of the discerning community that helps negotiate the meaning, curtails excessive practices, and points out wrong interpretations of the Bible. This is not to deny the real and constant danger that a whole community might be in the wrong; or that an authoritative leader might persuade a large majority.¹⁹⁶ Yet, academic communities are hardly exempt from these dangers. A Pentecostal version of the popular education model akin to CEBs might be a possible direction, but neither is it without its difficulties, since the introduction of a biblical scholar or a theologian brings a new dynamics into play in a community.¹⁹⁷

Finally, the issue that has caused much uproar in recent decades is the emergence of the so-called prosperity theology.¹⁹⁸ As has become clear, this is a

195 Latin American liberation theologians have a tendency to warn about the dangers of a fundamentalist understanding of the Bible. These comments sometimes make explicit or implicit references to Pentecostal and/or charismatic groups (see, for example, Gabriel Mestre, "Métodos y acercamientos exegéticos en la interpretación de la Biblia," in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Antiguo Testamento. Vol. I. Pentateuco y Textos Narrativos* [eds. A. Levoratti et al.; Navarra. Verbo Divino, 2005], 63; Armando J. Levoratti, "Panorama de una crisis," in *Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano. Antiguo Testamento. Vol. I. Pentateuco y Textos Narrativos* [eds. A. Levoratti et al. Navarra; Verbo Divino, 2005], 181–182).

196 It is most certain that the many Pentecostal denominations would benefit from participating in ecumenical dialogues with other Christian traditions.

197 This is not to deny the urgency of biblical education and theological formation in global Pentecostalism. In my opinion, it is an urgent priority for the health of the movement; however, teaching historical-criticism with its Enlightenment presuppositions and propositions as found in many European or North American Universities would be a repetition of past mistakes.

198 Amos Yong and Katherine Attanasi, eds., *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Amos Yong ("A Typology of prosperity Theologies: A Religious Economy of Global Renewal or a

widely varied phenomenon and should not be equated solely with popular TV evangelists or even with UCKG in Brazil. It is undeniable that many people have testified to the help they have received through the neo-Pentecostal churches. Some scholars have linked prosperity teaching and the global capitalist system too hastily, whereas others point out that it is more a survival strategy than a conscious promotion. The link to social concern is also rather ambiguous, though it is undeniable that often the emphasis on the outward signs of prosperity (temples, TV stations, and so on) outweighs the social concerns.

The Bible plays an important, though not sole, role in the rhetoric of the prosperity teachings. Though the voluntary nature of giving to the churches is commendable, in the strong pleas for finances this is a minor key. Similarly, the notion of “sowing and reaping” that uses biblical imagery, and at times specific texts, is sometimes furnished with threats or at least implied negative consequences for those who do not give. A typical example is the idea that the one who does not give tithes (10% of one’s income) is stealing from God.¹⁹⁹ While people are perhaps more used to strong rhetoric in Latin America than in my northern European context, one cannot help but see signs of religious manipulation at play in the more extreme forms of prosperity teachings. Yet, in order to get a better picture and be more specific about the ways the Bible is utilized in the prosperity rhetoric, more detailed research is needed.

1.3 Brief Comparison of Popular CEB and Pentecostal Hermeneutics

This chapter has discussed the origins and recent developments of two important hermeneutical approaches in Latin America; that is, liberation hermeneutics and Pentecostalism. It is interesting to note that though both have special features, it is also possible to discern similarities.²⁰⁰ For example, both CEBs

Renewal Economics?” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity. The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (eds. A. Yong and K. Attanasi; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15–33, notes that most of the critics of prosperity teachings come from relatively affluent parts of the global west. In other words, most have never lived or experienced dire poverty. See also Anderson, *An Introduction*, 144–165; Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*; Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*. For a balanced survey that takes into consideration the variety of prosperity theologies around the globe, see the anthology by Yong and Attanasi, *Pentecostalism and Poverty*.

199 Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 114–164.

200 The focus here is on briefly comparing CEBs, not liberation theologies, to Pentecostal hermeneutics.

and Pentecostal communities largely attract the poor and marginal segments of society, even if the latter seems to cater to the poorest of the poor in greater measure. Both groups focus on the experience and lived life of the community, even though Pentecostals emphasize the miraculous much more. Both also place a premium on the community. Regarding the engagement with the biblical texts, the exegetical methods bear similarities in that intuition, imagination, relevance, and free association of ideas play an important role. The selection of texts, however, and usage in liturgy and appropriation generally take different directions.

Regarding differences, Pentecostals emphasize the experience of the Spirit and the miraculous as an important hermeneutical factor, whereas CEBs rely more on discussions and textual and rational analysis. This is at least somewhat ironic if one considers that liberation theologians often accuse Western biblical scholars of overt rationalism. CEBs focus on the socio-political transformation, whereas Pentecostals focus on the individual to a greater extent in his/her various dimensions (e.g., healing, morality, personal finances).²⁰¹ As such, CEBs tend to be explicitly committed to a political ideology that is perceived to be most beneficial for their goals of liberation, while Pentecostals often try to remain neutral or end up siding with the prevailing ideology, often out of necessity.²⁰² This difference tends to have important hermeneutical consequences. Finally, Pentecostals generally lack trained clergy, whereas CEBs, at least in theory, are connected to a network of theologians and biblical scholars. This helps to bring outside scholarly ideas and balance to the communal practice and biblical interpretation. Pentecostals' disconnection to biblical scholars and theologians has saved some from overt dependence from outside forces regarding their theology, and perhaps, in the financial realm, but it also has made them more susceptible to overt subjectivism, lack of theological depth, and potential fanaticism.

As mentioned earlier, Mesters' depiction of the popular hermeneutics of CEBs is somewhat idealistic. The same may be said to some extent of the presentation of Pentecostal hermeneutics above, even if I have attempted to be critical in my analysis. One of the difficulties of presenting an account of

201 Arnaiz (*Haciendo crecer la vida*, 30) tells of an experience in Colombia where some CEB members left the community and went over to the Pentecostal churches, because they considered CEBs lacked spirituality—that is, they focused too much on the rational. From then on, the CEB needed to put more emphasis on the spirituality of the participants.

202 Cf. Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 73–78.

Pentecostal hermeneutics in Latin America is the dearth of thorough research in the area. Thus, in order to investigate the subject of ordinary Pentecostal readers' interpretation and use of the Bible, especially as it relates to the theme of wealth and poverty in Luke's gospel, it is important to discover proper tools and methods for the task. This is the theme of the next chapter.

Review, Analysis, and Presentation of Methods

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there exists hardly any in-depth research on Pentecostals' interpretation and use of the Bible in Latin America. Given this presupposition, then what method should be employed in this type of investigation? Further, since this study is not only limited to analyzing present-day readers' views in general but includes a specific focus on the theme of wealth and poverty in Luke's gospel in its historical setting, it is important to proceed with care. Therefore, this chapter has two main sections. The first focuses on reviewing and analyzing a new method called empirical hermeneutics, which is later used to investigate the interpretative processes of the Bolivian Pentecostal readers. The second part lays out the methodological framework, both for the empirical case study and the historical reading of Luke's poverty texts. As such, the objective of this chapter is to give the reader a comprehensive outline of the methods used to extract and analyze the data in the following chapters.

2.1 Review of Empirical Hermeneutics

Empirical hermeneutics focuses on investigating ordinary people's reading habits and interpretative practices. Methodologically, it combines a variety of empirical approaches with biblical studies. There are only a handful of studies that have used empirical hermeneutics,¹ some of which are difficult to obtain.

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- 1 Musa W. Dube, "Reading of Semoya: Batswana Women's Interpretations of Matt 15:21–28," *Semeia* 73 (1996): 111–129; Malika Sibeko and Berverly Hadad, "Reading the Bible 'with' Women in Poor and Marginalized Communities in South Africa," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 83–92; Justin S. Ukpong, "Popular Reading of the Bible in Africa and Implications for Academic Readings. Report of the Field Research Carried out on Oral Interpretation of the Bible in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria under Auspices of the Bible in Africa Project, 1991–1994," in *The Bible in Africa. Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (eds. G. West and M. Dube; Boston: Brill, 2000), 582–597; Ernst M. Conradie, "A Preface on Empirical Biblical Hermeneutics," *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 333–339; Erns M. Conradie and Louis E. Jonker, "Bible Study within Established Bible Study Groups: Results of an Empirical Research Project," *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 381–398; Brian Malley, *How the Bible Works. An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicism* (New York: Altamira Press, 2004); de Wit et al., "Through the Eyes," 3–53; Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics*

Each approaches the subject from a different angle, both methodologically and pragmatically.

There are a number of anecdotal reports of ordinary people's Bible readings and many scholars and lay people have experiences of group Bible studies in church communities. Nevertheless, empirically based research in this area is scarce. Hans de Wit, the leader of the largest research project in empirical hermeneutics to date, states that little systematic empirical research has been conducted even in Latin America, and hardly any concerning the possible links between Bible reading and social transformation.²

Before reviewing some of the first formal attempts to utilize empirical hermeneutics, some antecedents are highlighted, all of which come from the non-Western world. Perhaps the earliest reading report is Ernesto Cardenal's recording of the Solentiname peasants' Bible studies between 1975 and 1977. While he did not attempt a formal analysis of these Bible studies, and the reports are not always verbatim, the collection would merit detailed investigation.³

Carlos Mester's pioneering work among the CEBs in Brazil is also worth noting.⁴ While he does not use controlled empirical methodology and his report at times is anecdotal, he sometimes quotes people's actual words from interviews, group Bible studies, and his experiences. He also mentions a questionnaire that was distributed in an unknown location, which he presumably used in his 1983 book, *Flor Sem Defesa*. He states concerning the questionnaire, "Since my task was not so much to interpret what the reports said as to get through to the situation they described, I took the liberty of fleshing out the skeleton of reports with facts I experienced myself or learned from others."⁵

(Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007); Louis J. Lawrence, *The Word in Place: Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts* (London: SPCK, 2009); Elia S. Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized. Reading the Gospel of John in a Context of HIV/AIDS-Related Stigmatization in Tanzania* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2011); Hans de Wit and Antonio López, eds. *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2013). Also, de Wit, ("Through the Eyes," 53) mentions a few other studies in his article. Unfortunately, the second volume of de Wit's project, *Bible and Transformation*, came out too late to be considered for this study.

2 de Wit, "Through the Eyes," 41–42.

3 For an analysis of the studies, see Blount, *Cultural Interpretation*, Kindle loc. 571–767. It is important to note that the Bible studies in Solentiname are not verbatim reports but include numerous elaborations by Cardenal (Ernesto Cardenal, *El evangelio en Solentiname* (with introduction) [Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2006], 11–15).

4 Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*; Mesters has a number of other works but the now classic *Flor Sem Defesa* (Engl. *Defenseless Flower*) is his most extensive work in this area.

5 Ibid., 57.

It is evident that Mesters' report is not attempting to convey a detached description of people's interpretations. Rather, he is more interested in giving his own contribution as a theologian and pastoral worker. Though his report lacks the rigor of an empirical study, it nevertheless points to a new direction that is now being pursued by empirical hermeneutics.

In addition to these two pioneering works, R. S. Sugirtharajah has collected a number of short reading reports in his anthology, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (1st ed. 1991), that highlights how ordinary readers understand biblical texts.⁶ The section entitled, "People as Exegetes: Popular Readings," provides actual reading reports of community Bible studies from around the globe, though it is not always clear how these reports were obtained and how faithful they are to the actual reading events that took place.

The second antecedent to empirical hermeneutics is the realization that ordinary readers can contribute to the scholarly enterprise within biblical studies. This is often referred to as dialogical hermeneutics or a "reading with" approach. Here, scholars and ordinary readers read the Bible together and mutually enrich and correct each other's perspectives. Several studies and short reading reports have been conducted using this method, with Gerald West from South Africa being perhaps the most notable author among these.⁷ Nevertheless, the "reading with" approach in its preliminary form probably

6 R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (New Edition. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 405–456.

7 See Gerald O. West "Introduction," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Scholars Reading Together with Their Local Communities* (ed. G. West; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–5; Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor. Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 9–78, 124–142; Eric Anum, "Ye ma wo mo! African Hermeneuts, You Have Spoken at Last: Reflections on Semeia 73 (1996)," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities* (ed. G. West; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) 7–18; Mogomme A. Masoga, "Dear God! Give Us Our Daily Leftovers and We Will Be Able to Forgive Those Who Trouble Our Souls': Some Perspectives on Conversational Biblical Hermeneutics and Theologies," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities* (ed. G. West; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 19–27; Nicole M. Simonopoulos, "Who Was Hagar? Mistress, Divorcee, Exile, or Exploited Woman: An Analysis of Contemporary Grassroots Readings of Genesis 16 by Caucasian, Latina, and Black South African Women," in *Reading Other-Wise. Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities* (ed. G. West; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 63–72; Also, Semeia 1996, 73 is dedicated to the topic.

originated within the CEBs of Latin America,⁸ though it is impossible to trace its origins. Priests, pastors, and scholars have undoubtedly read the Bible with their local communities in different capacities ever since printed materials became available.

Perhaps the more novel idea of the “reading with” method is the realization that scholars are not reading “for” the ordinary people but rather “with” them. That is, interpretations, methods, and meanings are not imposed on people but rather the focus is on dialogue where each side is allowed (at least theoretically) a voice and equal access to the meaning of the text as well as its appropriation. In this mode of reading, appropriation takes precedence over historical background, literary structure of the text, or theological nuances, and the focus is on the community and socio-religious transformation. The power dynamics between the ordinary and expert readers, however, as well as the facilitation style and the nature of contributions are contested among the practitioners.⁹

The first empirical study conducted by biblical scholars to my knowledge was “Bible in Africa Project” (1991–1994), which incorporated empirical field research as part of the larger project with a corresponding field study in Glasgow, Scotland.¹⁰ Musa Dube’s research project among the poor and marginalized women of African Independent Churches in Batswana followed shortly after.¹¹ The project started in 1994 and used interviews, questionnaires, and analyses of sermons as the main method. In addition to these, Dube and her research team conducted small group Bible studies of Matt. 15:21–28, during which specifically designed questions were asked of participants.

The main aim of the project was both exploratory and personal. Dube states that she was “searching for modes of reading that are subversive to imperialistic and patriarchal domination.”¹² It is clear, as the above statement indicates that both the agenda and the passage she investigated sprang from her personal interests and the desire to bring about transformation within the AIC communities. She affirms, “I chose the passage with the interests and position

8 Several African scholars have developed the “reading with” approach further, as seen in the works cited above.

9 Anum, “*Ye ma wo mo!*,” 7–13; Eric Anum, “Unresolved Tensions and the Way Forward,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (eds. H. de Wit et al.; Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 176–195; Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2005), 2–9.

10 Ukpong, “Popular Reading,” 582–594; John Riches, “Interpreting the Bible in African Contexts. Glasgow Consultation.” *Semeia* 73 (1996): 181–188.

11 Dube, “Reading of Semoya,” 111–129.

12 Dube, “Reading of Semoya,” 115.

of AICs women in mind; particularly, the issues of healing, race, gender, and land.”¹³ She clearly situates her empirical report and analysis in the postcolonial, feminist, and liberationist axis and is transparent regarding her agenda.

The personal nature of the research undoubtedly influenced her choice of methodology. Particularly, the direct and probing questions seem to be related to her desire to challenge women to think deeply about their views of the passage. It would have been interesting to read a full transcription of the Bible studies in order to gain more insight into the interpretative processes and group dynamics. As many have pointed out, the subjective agenda of the research project can no longer be seen solely as a negative feature. After all, a completely objective stance is hardly possible. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder whether a more descriptive account, or posing different questions, would have produced significantly different results.¹⁴

The Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) conducted another small-scale project in South Africa around the same time as Dube’s. It is doubtful, however, whether this project should be classified as empirical hermeneutics proper.¹⁵ The ensuing report identifies the methodology as “reading with,” but it outlines no formal empirical methodology save giving some background information of the context and experience of the reading process.¹⁶ Nevertheless, a few short comments are worth noting. The reading process follows the basic outline of liberation hermeneutics, such as siding with the poor and the oppressed and raising critical consciousness of the community. Second, it uses simple questions to engage the participants.¹⁷ Finally, the transformative aspect of the process is highlighted by the needs of the local women and the action they decide to take as result of the study.¹⁸

As mentioned above, the methodology of this group project is rather simple and its aim is practical. Still, the example highlights how the difference between empirical hermeneutics proper and a “reading with” approach is not that great. Particularly, it is the lack of formal research methodology and protocols that

13 Ibid.

14 The possibility of yielding differing interpretations from similar groups is highlighted by Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 395.

15 de Wit mentions this in his short bibliography on empirical hermeneutics (“Through the Eyes,” 52–53).

16 Sibeko and Haddad, “Reading the Bible,” 83–92.

17 Sibeko and Haddad, “Reading the Bible,” 86. The participants were given the following instructions: 1) Read Mark 5:21–6:1 and discuss what the text is about 2) Can we say this text is about women and why? 3) How does this text apply to you as women in your context?

18 Ibid., 83–92.

distinguishes the two. The orientation of the “reading with” method is practical and engaged, whereas empirical research is generally more theoretical and detached in nature. Yet, the degree of engagement within empirical research has become more complex than it was some decades ago. Clearly, it seems that some aspects of the “reading with” approach may be fruitfully incorporated into certain types of empirical projects, especially when care is taken to utilize more nuanced methodology and formalized procedures are added.

In South Africa between 1996 and 2001, Ernst Conradie and Louis Jonker led a significantly larger and more nuanced empirical project. This project was conducted in two phases¹⁹ and aimed to answer a simple question: “What happens when people actually read the Bible?”²⁰ The purpose of the project was “to investigate the validity of hypotheses on various factors that play a role in biblical interpretation in group context.”²¹ The results of the project also led Conradie and Jonker to write a short article where they suggest criteria for relative adequacy in evaluating interpretations of biblical texts.²²

There are a number of important methodological factors that are worth noting in this project. First, the investigation attempted to be analytical in the sense that it did not aim to impose any particular reading ethos on the readers. It also tried to minimize the impact of the researcher and thus did not utilize facilitators.²³ Third, it focused on actual Bible reading groups within ecclesiastical communities and omitted input from sermons, devotional readings, and liturgies; the focus was on the transcribed (and video-taped) materials.²⁴

In addition to providing a thick description and analysis of the six reading groups involved, a number of theoretical and practical insights emerged

19 The pilot project included eight established Bible study groups and the second phase (main project) included six established Bible study groups. The second phase had a total of twelve Bible study events (two scriptures read once for each group). All groups came from the Western Cape in South Africa and included a range of denominations such as Anglican, Baptist, and Pentecostal (Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398; Conradie, “A Preface,” 333–339). See also Ernst M. Conradie, “Biblical interpretation in established Bible study groups: A chronicle of a regional research project,” *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 340–346.

20 Conradie, “A Preface,” 333.

21 Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398; Conradie, “Biblical interpretation,” 340–346. A further practical aim was to create pedagogical instruments for group study leaders.

22 Ernst Conradie and Louis Jonker, “Determining Relative Adequacy in Biblical Interpretation,” *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 448–455.

23 It need to be noted though that additional materials were given for each group to “test hypotheses”. Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398.

24 Ibid.

from the project. Perhaps the most important contribution was the creation and testing of hypotheses, which emerged during the pilot phase²⁵ and were subsequently tested in the second phase of the research project.²⁶ The seven hypotheses range from use of historical background information to ideological assumptions of the readers.²⁷ They provide comprehensive criteria for analyzing an interpretative process of group Bible study. In light of the comprehensiveness of these hypotheses, it is not surprising that others have profitably applied the criteria for analyzing hermeneutical processes of ordinary readers.²⁸ The theoretical questions and methodological insights of this research project have laid the foundation for other empirical projects.

Nevertheless, as the authors note, the results of the project are provisional and fragmentary, and another study might have produced different results, especially due to the small sample of the study.²⁹ Further, the lack of any specific sampling criteria for choosing the groups is noteworthy. A clearer focus in this matter might have sharpened the focus of the project. For example, if a sample would have included groups from only one church tradition, it might have been easier to rule out a particular factor, such as church tradition, and thus focus on other variables. One wonders how that would have affected the creation and testing of hypotheses. Either way, it is particularly difficult to develop procedures that would guarantee a degree of objectivity regarding different variables that contribute to the interpretative process. Finally, regarding the underlying philosophical assumptions, it seems that the project assumes

25 Conradie, "Biblical interpretation," 340–346. Descriptive and evaluative tools were developed in the pilot project in light of the following factors: 1) The text itself; 2) The world-behind-the-text; 3) The history of interpretation in-front-of-the-text; 4) The spiral of appropriation and application; 5) The contemporary context(s) of the interpreter; 6) The possibility of ideological distortions from a world "below" each of these aspects; and 7) The interaction and dynamics within the group.

26 Conradie and Jonker, "Bible Study," 381–383.

27 1) Doctrinal keys play a significant role in interpretation; 2) various strategies are used for rather direct application of the text; 3) surface structure of the text is interpreted in light of dominant heuristic keys of the group; 4) there is little interest in the historical context of the text; focus is on present day reality; 5) Contextual factors (race, class, gender etc.) play significant role in interpretation but only as filtered through the dominant doctrinal keys of the group; 6) groups remain unaware of ideological distortions on all levels of interpretation; and 7) group interaction is often aimed at reinforcing and clarifying the prevalent beliefs, practices, and purposes. Conradie and Jonker, "Bible Study," 381–398.

28 See e.g., Hans de Wit, "Codes and Coding," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (eds. de Wit et al.; Amsterdam Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 409–410.

29 Conradie and Jonker, "Bible Study," 381–398.

a certain openness and polysemy of the biblical texts and thus falls broadly under the postmodern paradigm.³⁰ Nevertheless, though not stated explicitly, the empirical part seems to favor a more objective approach and leans more toward the modernist approach.³¹ Be that as it may, this pioneering project laid the foundations of empirical hermeneutics and should be read by anyone interested in the field. The only hindrance is the relative difficulty in obtaining the journal articles outside of South Africa.

The research project by Conradie and Jonker laid the foundation for the first international Bible reading project, *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (henceforth, TEOA). This is undeniably the most notable empirical research project to date. As Hans de Wit, the leader of the project states, "This is the first time that a project with this presentation and scope has been implemented."³² TEOA was conducted between 2001 and 2004 (a second project started in August of 2011).³³ Its scope and breath is massive. The first

30 See especially Conradie and Jonker, "Determining Relative Adequacy," 448–455.

31 For an overview of philosophical assumptions of empirical research, see, for example, Jerry W. Willis, "Worldviews, Paradigms, and the Practice of Social Science Research," in *Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretative and Critical Approaches* (ed. J. Willis; Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2007), 1–26; E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (10th ed. Belmont, Calif.: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2004), 41–60.

32 de Wit, "Through the Eyes," 3.

33 The second project started in August of 2011 and focused on two texts (John 20:1–18; 2 Sam 13:1–21). It culminated in an international conference, "Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading," held in Amsterdam (Feb 18–20, 2013). The keynote lecture was given by Prof. F. F. Segovia. The accompanying conference volume came out at the same time as this study was handed in to the publisher. Specific Latin American anthology, *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina* (2013), was available for this study. However, it focuses exclusively on Luke 18:1–8 and the Latin American realities (see further below). Having participated in the second phase of the project and the Amsterdam conference, it seems that the methodology had not changed from the first phase of the project (cf. Hans de Wit, "My God," she said "ships make me so crazy": *Reflections on Empirical Hermeneutics, Interculturality, and Holy Scripture* [trans. H. Jansen; USA: Evangel Press, 2008]; Hans de Wit, *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Bible Reading: Manual for Facilitators and Reporters*. N.p. [Amsterdam: VU University, 2008]). However, the conference sought to elaborate and analyze whether the hypothesized transformation occurred during the intercultural reading process. There was no unanimity during the conference on how to measure transformation, how to define it, whether it might last beyond the initial excitement, or should it occur in the first place. In my own analysis of the group exchange, I suggested that one way to measure transformation would be by using social identity theory and intergroup relations and mapping the interaction analytically using various codes as categories. As a result, I concluded that both participating groups elicited various degrees of transformation.

project included 120 groups (of which more than half completed the reading process) from numerous Christian communities and denominations in several countries as diverse as Colombia, South Africa, Indonesia, Netherlands, and the U.S.

TEOA experimented with a new intercultural Bible reading method developed by de Wit that focuses on the interaction of small Bible reading groups. The main objectives of the project were to answer the following two questions: 1) "What happens when Christians from radically different cultures and situations read the same Bible story and start talking about it with each other?" and 2) "Can intercultural reading of Bible stories result in a new method of reading and communicating faith that is catalyst for new, trans-border dialogue and identity formation?"³⁴ The authors also share a common concern regarding the negative effects of globalization and the increasing gulf between rich and the poor.³⁵ The focus of the project included emphases on the cultural aspects and the transformative components of the Bible reading process. Here only a few of the key methodological aspects will be analyzed, especially as they relate to empirical hermeneutics.

Before moving into an analysis, the protocol of the project will be briefly noted. In a nutshell, groups of ordinary readers of any religious affiliation (though most are Christian) may participate in the project by signing-up via an interactive website (www.bible4all.org) and finding a partner group. The phases of the project are as follows: in the first phase, which is called "spontaneous reading of the text," the groups read the story of the Samaritan Woman in John 4 and transcribe or summarize a reading report along with a detailed group profile. In the second phase, which is called "confrontation," reading reports are exchanged with the partner group and an analysis and commentary is made on the partner group's reading report and group profile. These comments are then sent to the partner group. The last phase, or "change of

One group exhibited attitudinal change and deeper appreciation of "the other," yet the group remained closed in certain other areas. The other group was willing to adopt a new praxis (on a level of intention and desire) due to the inspiration and encouragement of the other group. The longevity of the change was impossible to determine within the framework of the project (for more details, see Esa Autero, "Ghosts, Women, and Evangelism (A Dialogue between Bolivia and Indonesia)," in *Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Reading* [eds. H. de Wit and J. Dyk; Atlanta: SBL, 2015], 267–289). For more information of the transformative effects of the intercultural Bible reading, see de Wit and López, "Lectura intercultural" and comments below.

34 de Wit, "Through the Eyes," 4.

35 Ibid., 3–53.

perspective,” closes the circle by an analysis of the other group’s report and a closure of the process.³⁶

At the outset it must be noted that TEOA falls broadly under the postmodern paradigm regarding the interpretative process of the biblical texts, though there is less reflection on the philosophical assumptions in the data analysis of the empirical reading reports. de Wit notes that the project is not about “the ultimate meaning” of the biblical texts but rather an opportunity to develop new perspectives. Empirically, testing hypotheses is an important part of the project, as was the case with Conradie and Jonker.³⁷

After analyzing and describing the concept of “ordinary readers,” de Wit highlights the actualizing component of the reading process. It should not be seen as the third part of the process (*pace* Krister Stendahl),³⁸ but rather as an essential dimension of understanding. Since ordinary readings often utilize their current context rather than an ancient biblical context as a guide, one can only understand the actualizing interpretation by entering that space.³⁹ de Wit adds that “[i]n spontaneous understanding, a different reading strategy and often a result other than what we encounter in scientific approach are involved.”⁴⁰ He follows Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “plenitude” of the texts to highlight the importance of taking into account the ordinary reader’s viewpoint and insights.⁴¹ de Wit also highlights the importance of what he calls “new factors” in the interpretative process, of which one is cultural diversity. Thus, in the TEOA, socio-cultural factors are a focal point and an organized “confrontation” is created between participating groups.⁴² The aim of the confrontation is to help ordinary Bible readers reflect on their own understanding of the passage in light of the partner group’s comments—and thus see it “through the eyes of another.”⁴³ According to de Wit, the results often led to the

36 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 5.

37 Ibid., 4.

38 See the classic article by Stendahl (“Biblical Theology,” 418–432) in IDB in which he articulated the distinction between what the text meant and what it means today. This simple distinction has been found to be overly simplistic in current hermeneutical debates. See, for example, Kevin Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” *NDBT* (2000): 52–64.

39 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 8–10.

40 Ibid., 14.

41 Here de Wit follows Ricoeur closely (see Paul Ricoeur, “Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics,” *New Literary History* 6 [1974]: 95–110; he defines plenitude as “all the connotations that can fit are to be attached; the poem means all it can mean.”

42 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 32.

43 The reason for this is that many ordinary Bible readers are only able to see in the biblical texts those things that they have been conditioned to see through the lens of their church tradition, culture, social status, and other factors.

widening of interpretative horizons and critical questioning, but also to blame, withdrawal, or even near hostility on other occasions.⁴⁴

The empirical method that was used to shift through a massive amount of information developed in TEOA was a grounded theory model. This approach was first created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s and aims “to generate a theory from the constant comparing of unfolding observations.”⁴⁵ It is an inductive approach that focuses on the systematic coding procedures and relies on continuous interaction between the initial data that is collected, the creation of hypotheses, and the subsequent data to be collected for the sharpening of hypotheses.⁴⁶ In a sense it is open-ended, allowing some flexibility in the approach to the subject matter, and thus it is suitable for such research. The method was used with the aid of computer-assisted coding procedures that enabled the analysis of the massive data in the project.⁴⁷ Several of the theoretical underpinnings such as the conceptual framework for coding derived from Conradie’s prior work in South Africa. The codes were applied to the reading reports according to the three phases of the project until they were saturated.⁴⁸ The method and subsequent coding was to reveal possible correlation between group profiles, interpretation, and subsequent interpretations. The most important aspects were relationship between culture and interpretation, effects of Bible reading to social transformation, and correlation between church affiliations and reading attitudes.⁴⁹ Of these, the church affiliation seemed to be the most important factor, though other factors, such as culture and social status, were influential to some degree as well.⁵⁰

While this short description scarcely does justice to the length and breadth of the project, the space does not allow more in-depth presentation. Finally, I would like to pose a few critical comments regarding the TEOA project.

44 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 25.

45 Babbie, *The Practice*, 291.

46 Ibid., 291–293.

47 The project utilized Atlasti software (de Wit, “Codes and Coding,” 397–405). de Wit lists 270 codes for first phase and 671 for analysis of reading report in second phase (“Codes and Coding,” 410).

48 de Wit, “Codes and Coding,” 408–434.

49 Ibid., 395–396.

50 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 44; Hans de Wit, “Intercultural Bible reading and hermeneutics,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (eds. H. de Wit et al.; Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 477–492; de Wit, “It should be Burned,” 54–57. Similarly Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398; Edgar L. López, “Intercultural Bible Reading by Catholic Groups of Bogota,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible Amsterdam* (ed. H. de Wit et al.; Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 142–160.

Methodologically, the greatest challenge was undoubtedly the collection, monitoring, and organization of the massive amount of data. One wonders what was lost between the actual group reading events and the scholarly analysis.⁵¹ Problems of translation, lack of a unified reading methodology,⁵² and reporting system all contribute to this. While the fairly flexible protocol in conducting the group Bible reading allows for cultural and denominational differences, it also makes the reading reports more complicated for scientific analysis. What might have been helpful for ordinary readers probably affected negatively the scientific validity. In that way, the project seemed to be somewhat of a compromise, as de Wit notices in the book's epilogue.⁵³

A more subtle issue is the connection between interpretative factors and the reading reports. Correlation, to which de Wit refers, between church tradition and its effects on the actual interpretation, could have been made more explicit. In any case, denomination or church affiliation seems to be somewhat easier to factor in than social status,⁵⁴ since the latter includes various nuances such as levels of poverty (from relatively poor to extreme poverty) as well as other types of social marginalization. Thus, social status seems to be equated with a vague concept of poverty.⁵⁵

A more surprising omission is the relative dearth of reflection on certain cultural factors of the project. The project used Geert Hofstede's theory of culture as "mental programming." Scholars of the project note that biblical texts should be interpreted within their cultural contexts.⁵⁶ There seemed to be less

51 de Wit ("Codes and Coding," 395) makes a brief mention of these problems. I am particularly aware of this problem since I was engaged in the second TEOA project that was launched in August 2011 in addition to the case study described later.

52 This was mentioned for example by Jilles de Klerk, "Indonesian Experiences with Intercultural Reading of John 4," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible Amsterdam* (eds. H. de Wit, et al.; Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 173–174.

53 Hans de Wit, "Epilogue," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (eds. H. de Wit, et al.; Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 509.

54 The exception is when group is heterogeneous regarding church affiliation or has no church affiliation. This seems to be the case with some groups.

55 Similarly, it is difficult to know whether some groups perceived themselves as poor or otherwise marginalized but did not want to express this due to shame or other factors.

56 Nestor Miguéz, "Reading John 4 in the Interface between Ordinary and Scholarly Interpretation," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible Amsterdam* (ed. H. de Wit et al. Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 334–347.

reflection, however, regarding the commentaries of the ordinary readers that were produced by a culture sometimes very different than the authors of the project or their affiliates. The editors of the project volume came from Europe and the U.S. but the work includes important contributions from Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere. Yet, there seems to have been fairly little reflection on the socio-cultural aspects of facilitation and representation. John Riches makes a few important comments regarding cultural factors, noting the possible misunderstanding of an educated Korean group's comment regarding (what was in their view) a simplistic report by a Colombian Pentecostal group.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, I am not sure to what extent either the Korean group or Riches understood the Pentecostal group. A more in-depth look at the Pentecostal religious experience as well as Colombian culture could have provided more insights into this intercultural misunderstanding.

The TEOA project, however, makes a unique contribution in the area of empirical hermeneutics. First, de Wit's research team has demonstrated that empirical hermeneutics is possible even in such a large-scale project. Second, the actual intercultural Bible reading method has a potential to contribute to the scholarly study of the Bible and help ordinary readers in widening their perspectives. TEOA gives full credence to the ordinary readers and gives them a voice. As de Wit notes, "all possible and impossible connotations have a vote in a spontaneous understanding." Therefore, they may aid understanding and should not be excluded.⁵⁸ Far from only contributing to the actualization of the texts, TEOA has shown that intercultural reading can also enrich historical and theological study of the Bible.⁵⁹ Finally, de Wit has brought to attention the importance of culture in addition to the socio-political components in

57 John Riches, "Intercultural Hermeneutics: Conversation across Cultural and Contextual Divides," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* Amsterdam (eds. H. de Wit et al. Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 488–489.

58 de Wit, "Through the Eyes," 14.

59 de Wit gives a few interesting examples regarding these (*Por un solo gesto de amor: Lectura de la Biblia desde una práctica intercultural* [Buenos Aires: ISEDET, 2010], 243–256). One of the most striking examples is the fact that great scholars such as Bultmann and Schnackenburg were ignorant of the erotic features often attached to "meetings at the well" (pace Gen 24). Nevertheless, several groups of ordinary readers in the TEOA project discovered these nuances in the text of John 4. Additionally, both Bultmann and Schnackenburg consider the role of the Samaritan women very passive as opposed to that of Jesus. For Bultmann, the dialogue with the woman is just a "stepping stone" for Jesus' self-revelation. Again, various ordinary readers come to almost contrary conclusions about the role of the woman and at times of Jesus as well (for various dimensions of this see, de Wit, *Por un solo gesto*, 248–256).

biblical studies. Though specifying culture as a hermeneutical factor is not a novelty, it is the focus on the interaction process that offers great possibilities. It holds a potential for widening of perspectives, formation of identity, and even a change of praxis. The idea of interaction that is integral to the intercultural Bible reading method may also be used, in my opinion, profitably in highlighting socio-political variables, such as poverty, exclusion, and power dynamics, in addition to cultural factors, both on local and global levels. Before moving on, it is important to note some aspects of the second part of de Wit's project that started in August 2011. Since the conference volume was not available as this study was submitted to the publisher, only the Latin American project that started in 2007 and focused on the Bible and transformation will be considered.

Hans de Wit and Edgar López have compiled an impressive volume, *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina*, which details the intercultural Bible reading processes between eighteen groups in four different Latin American countries (Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, and Guatemala).⁶⁰ Methodologically, the project uses the same intercultural Bible reading method, and the same protocol and procedures as TEOA, though the chosen text is the parable about the widow who pleaded the unjust judge for justice (Luke 18:1–8).

Some of the criticisms made above about TEOA (2004) no longer apply to the second phase of the project. There is more explicit reflection on cultural factors, both in the macro level of society and in the micro level, with each group by Latin American experts;⁶¹ there are more explicit quotes from the actual reading reports of the groups;⁶² and in at least some cases poverty is defined more clearly.⁶³ However, some of the ambiguities regarding validity

60 There were initially twenty groups and twelve (out of eighteen) group readings were given a detailed analysis (Hans de Wit, "Regados por los cerros," in *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina* [ed. H. de Wit and E. López. Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2013], 360, 432; Oscar A. Arango et al., "Las comunidades, sus contextos y su interacción," in *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina* [eds. H. de Wit and E. López; Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2013], 128).

61 Glafira Jiménez et al., "La impunidad en América Latina como desafío a la teología," in *Lectura intercultural de la Biblia en contextos de impunidad en América Latina* (eds. H. de Wit and E. López; Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2013), 21–94; Arango, et al., "Las comunidades," 127–303.

62 Arango et al., "Las comunidades," 127–303.

63 Ibid., 138.

mentioned above remain. For example, some groups gave verbatim reports whereas others were content with a summary.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the project to empirical hermeneutics is the concrete data that it produced about the practices of particular ordinary Latin American readers and how the intercultural Bible reading method functioned as a tool of transformation. In addition, the project gives an indispensable window into the suffering and injustice that the participants have endured in their respective contexts and how the reading of one simple Bible story functioned as a narrative of healing and transformation.⁶⁴ The project

64 de Wit estimates that 80% of the groups that participated in the project experienced positive transformative effects during the project (de Wit, "Regados por los cerros," 361). Some of the most pronounced transformative effects according to de Wit were growth and widening of interpretative horizons; transformation from fear and silence into perseverance and denouncement of injustice; processing trauma and forgotten memories and the new possibilities that these bring for faith and resistance (Ibid., 383–388). His conclusion is that this is a confirmation of the initial hypothesis and that "the biblical text, in certain cases and under certain circumstances, may act as a catalyst for transformation and change." He adds to this that much of the praxaeological effects are connected to the fact that the groups' situation is analogous with that of the parable; that is, impunity, injustice, and violence (Ibid., 386–387). While the importance of the data of the project is acknowledged, there are two issues that need to be raised regarding its transformative effects. First, as de Wit acknowledges, the actual praxis is on a level of intention rather than action (this does not negate the other forms of transformation that are more attitudinal). Second, it is difficult to estimate to what extent the groups that participated were predisposed to societal transformation before participating into the project. At least some groups are closely associated with liberation theology, human rights activism, and the like (see Arango et al., "Las comunidades," 125–154). Is there a correlation with this pre-understanding? This does not negate the effects or significance of the project but puts it into a larger perspective. My final observation of the project is the lack of participants from Pentecostal communities (only one individual in one group; most seem to be Catholics; see Ibid., 125–154, esp. 142). It was disappointing to note de Wit's brief characterization of Pentecostalism as something of a caricature; that is, that all Pentecostals are overly individualistic triumphalists who practice prosperity theology. He asks "in what Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal or evangelical churches . . . one still hears *Kyrie eleison*, *Gloria in excelsis* . . . combination of texts that were established elements of the liturgy of the Church since the fourth century? And not only do we not find *Kyrie eleison* anymore but we do not find any traces of *memoria passionis Christi* . . . The [Pentecostal] liturgies are permeated . . . and is celebrated *only* as the resurrection and as a triumph." He then briefly refers to a research project on Nigerian Pentecostalism to support his thesis (de Wit, "Regados por los cerros," 413). As mentioned, de Wit's comments are surprising in light of the stated inclusiveness of the project as well as the complete lack of information on Latin American Pentecostalism and its great variety. He seems to have no

also makes an important contribution in an area of theological reflection as it seeks to take into consideration the experience and reality of ordinary people's faith and struggle for justice.

Louis Lawrence's *The Word in Place: Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts* is one of the most comprehensive and creative studies utilizing empirical hermeneutics (though she does not use the concept empirical hermeneutics). Her investigation purported to document Contextual Bible Studies on select passages from the Gospel of Luke (15:11–32; 9:46–52; 8:22–39; 2:41–52). These studies were conducted in a variety of places in the southwest of England (inner-city, fishing village, rural village, deaf community, and clergy). The key aspect of her study was to link stories, story-telling, place, and place-making. She is particularly concerned about widespread dislocation caused by the western industrialized world's transitory ways of living.⁶⁵ This has brought about an acute sense of displacement and loss of place. She drew extensively from anthropological studies on place and place-making and conducted theological reflection on wide variety of issues regarding community, vocation, and identity formation.⁶⁶ An important tool in recovering the sense of place and community was Contextual Bible Study (CBS) through which groups explored the intersection between story, place, and narrative.⁶⁷

Lawrence selected texts for her project that were connected to the themes of home (15:11–32), displacement (9:46–52), sustainability (8:22–39), and being

knowledge of research done on Pentecostalism in Latin America by Pentecostal, Catholic, and Protestant scholars who have a completely different view than his. The comment also takes for granted that Western liturgical tradition is somehow normative or superior to that of the Pentecostal, which in some respects is closer to the Eastern Orthodox tradition in its emphasis on resurrection (see Hollenweger, *The Pentecostalism*, 218–227). In addition, it is only partially true that Pentecostals do not regard societal transformation as important (as de Wit states [see especially Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, eds. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1–15)], though it is difficult to talk in generalities about Pentecostalism. As Wightman has demonstrated in her anthropological study of Bolivian Pentecostalism, the fact that the personal relationship with Jesus constitutes the most important aspect of Pentecostal faith does not negate the importance of societal dimension of the faith (see Wightman, *New Bolivians*, 114–208). Further, as Sepúlveda has noted, in certain regions of Chile Pentecostalism has reached nearly 50% of the population (“Movimiento pentecostal,” 104–117). In light of this, personal transformation, if real and lasting, is bound to have a profound effect on the society as a whole, even without a particular agenda for social transformation.

65 Lawrence, *The Word in Place*, kindle loc. 140–187.

66 Ibid., 243–412.

67 Ibid., 412.

out of place (2:42–51).⁶⁸ She foregrounded community consciousness and communal experience in the CBS process. This helped each group to discover the meaning of the “word in place”.

Lawrence described her mode of research as “ethnography of groups”, which included CBS, various group exercises, and participant observations of the communities. She drew from previous CBS models (esp. G. West) but preferred to call ordinary readers “folk readers”. For the purpose of CBS the groups had a choice of four separate group sessions or a single-day workshop. Groups were also encouraged to create artistic and performative representations to explore the meaning of the texts for them.⁶⁹ As a facilitator, or someone who “read with”, she helped the groups explore place-related themes in the texts and people’s lives.

Lawrence’s study presented detailed descriptions of each place, including geographical, cultural, and historic aspects.⁷⁰ It seems that she recorded and transcribed the CBS sessions (though this is not explicitly stated), as the study included a fair number of direct quotes from the readers.⁷¹ The conclusions of her study may be summarized in the following points. First, CBS promotes sharing of stories and the task of contextualizing scripture within particular places.⁷² Second, identification with the images in the biblical texts is linked to the context—e.g., rural village identified with the “rural idyll” in the story of the Lost Son (15:11–32); and fishermen identified with a numbers of sea-related aspects in the story of stilling the storm (8:22–25).⁷³ Third, the “folk readers” use a variety of methods to interpret the Bible, many of which are ancient. Lawrence conceptualized the methods as allegory, parable, and Midrash.⁷⁴

Lawrence’s creative study is a great contribution to the field of empirical hermeneutics. In many sense it is also unique, as it explores the theme of place, place-making, and the “word in place” in a variety of communities. Her work is self-consciously constructive and postmodernist. She acknowledges contextuality of all understanding and takes theoretical clues from F. F. Segovia, B. Blount, and R. S. Sugirtharajah, among others.⁷⁵ Her ethnographic work also clearly acknowledges the situatedness of the researcher. In fact she is one of

68 Ibid., 709.

69 Ibid., 690, 713–738, 827.

70 Ibid., 1605–1628; 1668.

71 Ibid., See e.g., 1177; 1722; 1981–1990; 2016–2024.

72 Ibid., e.g., 2399.

73 Ibid., 2425–2468.

74 Ibid., 2518–2588.

75 Ibid., 2468–2495.

the few authors in this review who consciously and reflexively foregrounds her situatedness.

Lawrence also states that she attempted to bring forward the “contradictory tensions” within the groups.⁷⁶ While this is true, I think had she included more extensive dialogues in a transcript format, the point would have been clearer. As a matter of fact, I was eagerly waiting to read actual narrative dialogues from the various CBS groups. Excerpts of transcripts would have given a more vivid picture of both the agreements and disagreements in the groups, and their stories. It would have also enabled readers to see more clearly how Lawrence connected group interpretations to her own analysis and synthesis. In this sense Lawrence could have also stated more explicitly how she analyzed the data she had gathered. Further, throughout her description of the group readings, she moves to extensive reflections on a variety of topics, after which she returns to the group readings.⁷⁷ At times this helped contextualize the “place” or a particular topic, but with some frequency I found this back and forth movement confusing, as it was difficult to know where the group comments ended and Lawrence’s reflection started. Yet, this “blurring” of comments should not be seen only negatively. Lawrence self-consciously invites readers (and the communities) to see her account as part of the dialogue in “process of reverbalization and reinscription”, and thus as a way to be part of the “messy business of discerning the word in place”.⁷⁸ In other words, this is “her story” as much as “their story”. Finally, Lawrence’s analysis of the interpretative methods of “ordinary readers” would have benefitted from wider conceptual framework (such as Conradie and Jonker; and de Wit). The categories of allegory, parable, and Midrash give an idea of ordinary reader’s interpretative practices but a more in-depth analysis would have given a better idea of the groups’ approach to the texts and their particular contexts.

Another extensive empirical research is Elia Mligo’s revised dissertation, *Jesus and the Stigmatized: Reading the Gospel of John in a Context of HIV/AIDS-Related Stigmatization in Tanzania*. The objective of the study was to investigate how people living with HIV/AIDS read the biblical texts in John’s gospel (esp. John 4:1–42, 8:1–11, 9:1–41) in the context of stigmatization and how that reading challenges the African churches.⁷⁹ More specifically, the investigation attempted to discover the way the group analyzed the attitudes and actions of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2599.

⁷⁷ Ibid., See e.g., 1722–1761; 2284.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2610.

⁷⁹ Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 1–15.

Jesus toward the stigmatized people; the experience of the PLWHA⁸⁰ and stigmatization; the kind of image that the group had of Jesus through the text; and the possible challenges these might have to the churches of Tanzania. Mligo concludes, “[t]hrough these objectives, I investigate the way in which the Bible can be a resource for empowering PLWHA towards dignity, healing, and wholeness within the context of stigmatization.”⁸¹ Though he draws from a variety of disciplines ranging from biblical studies to anthropology and pedagogy, his main focus is on reflecting theologically on the plight of people stigmatized by HIV/AIDS.⁸²

Mligo situated his study in the critical research tradition and drew from stigma theories to establish how stigmatization affected people and communities.⁸³ He used contextual Bible study model (CBS), biographies of the participants, and participant observations as a framework for his research.⁸⁴ Methodologically, the most noteworthy issues are the following. He reflected critically on the CBS model, his role as a facilitator, and on various ethical issues. He also let participants pick the actual biblical text from a list of suggestions.⁸⁵ This gave freedom to the participants to reflect on a variety of texts before initiating the study.

Mligo saw the research process in terms of liberation and empowerment and took a proactive role as the facilitator in the process.⁸⁶ For example, when reading John 9:1–41 (a total of five sessions for one passage), he gave what appears to be rather lengthy explanations on “general African understanding of suffering and its cause” as well as how in the OT “God inflicted suffering on people due to disobedience.” This helped facilitate the next question about the similarities between the characters and situations in the text and the present-day reality of the participants.⁸⁷ In his data analysis, he used coding procedures and the conclusions were drawn from both the written data and observations. Finally, he concluded the study with a Christological reflection from below as well as drawing implications for the churches in dealing with PLWHA and stigmatization.⁸⁸

80 People living with HIV/AIDS.

81 Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 1–2.

82 *Ibid.*, 17.

83 *Ibid.*, 37–78.

84 *Ibid.*, 15–20; 25–30, 135–162.

85 *Ibid.*, 162–172.

86 *Ibid.*, 162–165; “the power of the facilitator aims at enhancing, creating, and transforming the lives of the people” (p. 162).

87 Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 329–332.

88 *Ibid.*, 179–180, 360–412.

A few critical remarks about Mligo's study are in order. First, the relevance and urgency of the topic needs to be applauded at the outset. In light of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa and the lamentable response of many churches, it needs to be addressed. Mligo's research, the community consciousness raising, and the CBS process seem to fit well as one of the responses to this crisis. According to him, the participants experienced transformative effects in response to the study.⁸⁹ Second, in light of the urgency of the crisis, Mligo's proactive stance in the CBS process is easy to understand. After all, he desires to bring about liberation to those who are stigmatized. As mentioned earlier, this can hardly be seen as negative. Yet, the question needs to be raised to what extent the process would have been liberating had a different type of facilitation style been adopted; or how would the participants have related to the Bible stories without Mligo's input? He seems to give a significant contribution in helping the participants connect their experience and the liberating Bible reading process. Third, perhaps more surprisingly, though Mligo states that the CBSS were transcribed, the over 400-page book included relatively few quotes and *ipsissima verba* from the actual Bible studies. This would have helped the reader hear more directly the voices of the stigmatized individuals and their experiences. It also would have been interesting to note the possible variety of views, nuances, and possibly conflicting statements that the participants made throughout the study. Further, this would have made it easier to trace the development of thought or growth process of the group as well as the contribution of the facilitator in it. Despite this critique, Mligo's work is a unique and important contribution in the field of empirical hermeneutics and I greatly benefitted from it in developing this study.

Two other significant studies in the area of empirical hermeneutics are worthy of brief mention. As such they demonstrate quite a different approach to empirical hermeneutics.

Andrew Village's study, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics*, is unique and methodologically one of the most challenging of these studies. It focuses on lay people in various strands of the Anglican Church (Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, Evangelical-Charismatic, and Broad Church). It highlights the way ordinary (non-scholarly) readers read the

89 For example, Mligo mentions that the text and the CBS process helped participants create their own narrative regarding stigma that was liberating to them; this narrative did not focus on coping with the stigma but with reversing the stigmatization through greater acceptance. The group members also grew in confidence and wanted to be more open about their HIV/AIDS status. They also saw Jesus as a compassionate companion to them and one who gives them strength to reject stigmatization (*Ibid.*, 355–359).

Bible and why they read in a certain way. It is unique in that it follows quantitative analysis. It combines behavioral studies, attitude measurement, and sophisticated statistical analysis in an attempt to analyze factors that affect biblical interpretation.⁹⁰ Village used Mark 9:14–29 as a test passage and analyzed the results of 404 questionnaires (with more than 200 questions in a questionnaire) that he received back from the churches. The five areas of focus regarding interpretation were: 1) biblical literalism, 2) interpretative horizons, 3) personality, 4) interpretative communities, and 5) Holy Spirit and charismatic influence.

To highlight a few of the results, according to his research, education is one of the key factors that affect several aspects of interpretation. Village states that “people with low levels of education . . . interpret literally, but that does not mean that education would automatically change their views.”⁹¹ Particularly, evangelicals could be highly educated but still retain a rather literal understanding of the biblical texts. In addition to education, personality, experience, and charismatic practice were important factors in biblical interpretation, more so than sex or age.⁹² Here we can see again the complex variables that affect interpretation, and it appears that the methods used may also contribute to the differing results.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Village’s research is his focus on correlation rather than causality. Correlation shows the complex factors involved in the interpretative processes. The quantitative analysis clearly goes beyond anecdotal references and, according to Village,⁹³ covered a sufficiently wide range of people within the Church of England. Another factor worth noting is its focus on the ordinary Anglo middle class churchgoers in England. This is undoubtedly reflected in the results as Village notes “differences between individuals seemed to account for more . . . than differences in social or denominational locations.”⁹⁴ While this is not a critique as such, it does highlight the individualism of the Western culture. Of course, the result might have been quite different had the sample included a congregation with a large percentage of immigrants from cultures that had a more collective orientation. In light of constructing empirical theology that Village proposes in the final chapter, this is an important factor. Finally, there is little or no interaction with the

90 Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 5–11.

91 *Ibid.*, 68.

92 *Ibid.*, 160–161.

93 Village, *The Bible and Lay People*, 15–17.

94 *Ibid.*, 161.

empirical works mentioned in this chapter, or with literature that deals with the “ordinary readers” of the two-thirds world. These would have certainly enriched the study and perhaps would have led the researcher to highlight additional or different aspects in the study.

The second study in Western Christian churches is Brian Malley’s anthropological work on Evangelical Biblicism.⁹⁵ It is an ethnographic study that empirically examines key components of evangelical Biblicism in the U.S.⁹⁶ It focuses on the category of the Bible, biblical interpretation, and biblical authority with an eye to establishing an improved model of evangelical scripturalism. The evangelical Baptist church where the researcher conducted his study in some aspects sounds like a stereotypical “American evangelical church” though some of the results are surprising. Malley notes the importance of recognizing the nature of encounter between the ancient texts of the Bible and its present-day readers. That is, the readers’ construction of meaning invites explanation in terms of history, psychology, and social location.⁹⁷ He draws from social and cognitive psychology to draw links between these factors.⁹⁸ While it is evident that his research is rather removed from what is usually considered biblical studies, Malley highlights the continuum between biblical studies per se and empirical research.

2.1.1 *Analysis and Evaluation of Empirical Hermeneutics*

As can be seen from this review of empirical hermeneutics, there is no uniform method, and the practices and protocols vary widely. The results are also rather heterogeneous. Exactly what are the factors, and to what extent do they influence the interpretative processes? Though church tradition and denominational affiliation seem to be the foremost factors, culture, social status, and individual and communal influences seem to be important as well. It is too early to make overarching conclusions. Also, the level of sophistication in terms of methodology ranges from a simple “reading with” approach to specifically constructed qualitative and quantitative studies with complex statistical analyses.

95 Brian Malley, *How the Bible Works. An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicism* (New York: Altamira Press, 2004), 1–67.

96 Malley’s anthropological study included interviews of 40 people as well as extensive participant observation (*How the Bible Works*, 21–50).

97 Malley, *How the Bible Works*, 10–11.

98 Malley also acknowledges the difference between historical understandings of biblical texts but thinks that present-day readers’ usage may also shed light on the historical reconstruction (*Ibid.*).

It seems to me that empirical hermeneutics can provide transparency and systematization for both the contextual analysis and the interpretation of the texts. As is well known, contextual hermeneutics has been criticized for a number of things. Some of the most important criticisms are the potential fragmentation of contexts into smaller and smaller units,⁹⁹ the difficulty of applying critique by those outside the particular “context,” and the difficulty of knowing who is speaking for whom in any given context.¹⁰⁰ Taking a brief example of the last issue mentioned. Many scholars opine that Latin American popular biblical hermeneutics is synonymous with liberation theology and the ecclesial base communities. Nevertheless, not only is there variety within Latin American biblical scholarship but, to my knowledge, there are no empirical studies of the ever-growing popular hermeneutics of Evangelical and Pentecostal groupings.¹⁰¹ Thus, for those who are not familiar with the broader context of the continent, a mistaken picture of “popular biblical hermeneutics of Latin America,” albeit unintentionally, may be communicated.

Using empirical hermeneutics could help in solving some of these problems by specifying the context and highlighting who are doing the reading, for whom, and for what purpose. Apart from giving general contextual information, a formal research protocol is supposed to highlight such things as the criteria for choosing a specific community or communities, how the data is gathered (e.g., interviews, simple observations or probing questions, or praxis oriented “reading with” studies), and which theoretical and methodological assumptions lie behind the research. For example, a grounded theory model, as used by TEOA, highlights different areas than a concentrated case study or an ethnographic observation. For a liberationist oriented researcher, a “participatory action research” model, where the scholar actually participates as an active change agent, might be appealing.¹⁰² Quantitative analysis, with statistical analysis, poses its own peculiar challenges but should not be ruled out either. A mixed method research would combine both approaches.

As well, the methods for analyzing the gathered empirical data vary, and what is considered “evidence” of a particular interpretation, are not at all

99 de Wit, “Intercultural Bible Reading,” 477–492. If the problem is stated somewhat (over-) simplistically, the analysis of the context becomes an end in itself and the text to be analyzed nearly disappears from the interpretative horizon.

100 Similarly, Botta and Andinach, “Introduction,” 1–10.

101 See the statistics in Miguez, *Lectura latinoamericana*, 77–99.

102 On this, see Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, “Introduction,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*. (2nd ed.; eds. P. Reason and H. Bradbury; London: SAGE Publications, 2008), 1–9.

unambiguous questions.¹⁰³ As mentioned earlier, it is nearly impossible to detect causality, but it is also difficult to determine what factors, and to what extent, such factors as church tradition, culture, social location, and gender affect the interpretation.¹⁰⁴ A simple issue such as choosing a biblical passage for a community to read is an ideological step and is likely to affect the results. These aspects, and many others, could be foregrounded in the empirical research protocol. Finally, there are a number of factors that are difficult to account for, such as the group's dynamics and previous experience in Bible study.¹⁰⁵ Also, the mere presence of a researcher is likely to affect the group dynamics considerably.

Of course, some important questions surface regarding empirical hermeneutics: Should biblical scholars bother in the first place?¹⁰⁶ Are they competent in conducting research that involves empirical methodology? Would not social scientists or anthropologists be more adept? The purpose and objectives of any given study would perhaps answer these questions. Still, if the focus is on the Bible, which as such is a product of historical and cultural processes of the ancient Near East, it is perhaps best understood by biblical scholars. As is generally acknowledged, the interpretative horizon has become increasingly complicated in recent decades. The purely descriptive historical research is no longer a viable option, and the boundaries between theological disciplines, not to mention exegesis and hermeneutics, are not as clear as they used to be.¹⁰⁷ In this regard, the division of interpretative horizons into “behind,” “on,” and “forward/in front” of the text may be helpful.

103 Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research. Design and Methods* (4th ed. Kindle edition; Thousand Oaks, Kindle loc. 2619–3292) discusses data analysis in case study model.

104 According to studies by Conradie and Jonker's “Bible Study” (2001) as well the TOEA project (2004), the most important factor is church affiliation. Other factors, such as culture and social location, are subordinate to this. Village notes that gender plays a small role in the interpretation (*The Bible and Lay People*, 160–161).

105 Gerald O. West, “Artful Facilitation and Creating a Safe Interpretative Space. An Analysis of Aspects of a Bible Study” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (eds. H. de Wit et al.; Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 214–237; Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398.

106 Niko Huttunen, *Raamatullinen sota. Raamatun käyttö ja vaikutus vuoden 1918 sisällissodan tulkinnossa* (Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura, 2011), 11–12, raises similar questions in his reception-critical study.

107 Segovia highlights this (*Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 34–54, 119–156).

Empirical hermeneutics, which focuses on the “forward” of the text,¹⁰⁸ may be successfully conducted by biblical scholars provided that s/he learns the basic orientation and skills of empirical research. The following questions might then be highlighted:¹⁰⁹ How is the Bible, though being an ancient document, interpreted in a meaningful way in a new context? How does the new context(s) affect the understanding of the texts? Which texts (or parts of texts) are considered meaningful and which (parts) are pushed aside, explained purposefully or ignored quietly? What factors contribute to the creation of meaning in the current socio-cultural context? What praxeological effects does the text have? The hermeneutical gap, or the interpretative horizon between the “then” and “now,” the negotiation of meaning, and others factors can therefore be analyzed. This is something with which biblical scholars are familiar but social scientists less so. Additionally, a biblical scholar could consciously combine the empirical research with either (or both) “behind” or “on” the text approaches and thus also contribute to these areas within biblical studies.¹¹⁰

Finally, with the aid of empirical hermeneutics, the ordinary readers’ interpretation and use of the biblical texts can potentially be highlighted with more precision. As such, the experience of ordinary readers is interesting and meaningful and has manifold socio-religious and political implications. Nevertheless, it is important to know how and whose voice is heard and who does the listening and reporting. A close hearing of ordinary people’s interpretation and use of the Bible also opens up avenues for constructing, what Village calls, empirical theology where people’s ideas, concerns, and practices are taken seriously in identity building and theological and/or ideological constructions.¹¹¹

It may be concluded from this review of empirical hermeneutics that there is no uniform method, and the practices and protocols vary widely. The results of any empirical study seem to depend on one’s approach. Some of the key questions related to this follow: Is the investigator a mere observer or does s/he give input? Does the investigator set the agenda or does it arise out of

108 Here I think that an important aspect of the “forward” of the text is what is variously called “effective history” or “reception history” of the text (see, for example, Heikki Räisänen, “The Effective History of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 [1992]: 303–324). Consciousness of this aspect would potentially be a great help in analyzing the interpretation of ordinary readers.

109 The questions follow Huttunen’s important analysis (*Raamatullinen sota*, 11–13).

110 As de Wit’s (*En la dispersión*) examples on the contributions of the ordinary readers have demonstrated.

111 Mlingo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, and de Wit, “Regados por los cerros,” also see empirical work as an important factor as they construct their contextual theologies.

community needs and interests? What texts or themes should one pick and to what extent should the investigator probe for information on any given passage or issue? What about the exact location and nature of the community where the investigation is conducted? How does one pick the community, participants within the community, and what criteria are used to determine this? While I am not able to give an answer to all of the questions raised above, the next section lays out the empirical methodology as well as the research protocols and ethics used in this study. Finally, before moving to the analysis of Lucan texts, I will set forth the methodology for combining the scholarly historical exegesis of texts and the empirical materials of the case study.

2.2 Methodological Framework of the Study

2.2.1 *Methodological Description of the Empirical Component of the Study*

The empirical component of this study examines two different types of Pentecostal communities in Bolivia with the goal to find out whether the communities' socio-economic status has an effect on people's understanding of biblical texts that focus on poverty, wealth, and salvation. Salvation here is understood to mean broadly anything that is either directly or indirectly connected to the betterment of one's individual or communal life. This may manifest in material, social, emotional, or spiritual form, particularly when it is understood to proceed, directly or indirectly, from God or transcendent reality. Socio-economic marginality refers to any of the variables of social exclusion on the basis of income or economic opportunities, race, gender, or class. The main focus, however, is on two variables—income and social marginality. The latter is understood as powerlessness to affect the life of individual and community.

The main question regarding the *empirical* component may thus be formulated as follows: How do the socio-economically privileged and marginalized Pentecostal groups in Bolivia interpret the ideas of poverty and wealth in Luke's gospel, and what hermeneutical factors play a role in the process?¹¹² For this purpose, texts were selected in advance. Nevertheless, it seems that many of these passages included themes and issues, such as the privileged status of the poor or marginalized (Luke 6:20–22; 14:12–14; 16:19–31) and daily worry

112 It is important to keep in mind that the study as a whole also includes an historical component. As such, the inquiry here concerns only the empirical component and does not exhaust the focus of the study as a whole.

about food (Luke 12:22–34), that are relevant to the readers who lack material goods and experience social marginality. Some of the same texts also explicitly criticize wealth and people who have material possessions.¹¹³ Furthermore, according to many Latin American biblical scholars and popular works, Luke's gospel is read and used extensively among both Protestants and Catholic groups. Many from both groups have testified that communal reading of these texts was beneficial for their lives.¹¹⁴

In order to answer the above-mentioned question, a comparative case study of two distinct communities in Bolivia was constructed. The case study model is particularly suitable for research dealing with “how” and “why” questions.¹¹⁵ Robert Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”¹¹⁶ To this he adds that a case study generally has to cope with multiple variables and thus needs to rely on multiple sources of evidence. This makes triangular¹¹⁷ data collection and the development of theoretical propositions important.¹¹⁸

There are several important theoretical propositions that are connected to this case study. As mentioned earlier, empirical research on biblical interpretation has highlighted the influence of church tradition in the interpretative processes of ordinary readers.¹¹⁹ This is particularly important concerning

113 It is clear from the extant literature that these concerns are at the forefront of many marginalized communities in Bolivia, be they Protestants, Catholics, or others. See, for example, Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*; Wightman, *New Bolivians*; for compilations of statistics see Gregorio Iriarte, *Análisis crítico de la realidad. Compendio de datos actualizados* (17ª edición; Cochabamba, Bolivia: Grupo Editorial Kipus, 2010), 247–539.

114 Carlos Mesters, *Querido Teófilo: Encuentros Bíblicos sobre Evangelio de Lucas* (Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2000); Rene Krüger, “La Biblia en los procesos recientes de América Latina,” *Cuadernos de Teología* XIII (1993): 87; RIBLA #44, 2003 is dedicated to Luke's gospel.

115 Yin, *Case Study*, Kindle loc. 429–476.

116 *Ibid.*, 645.

117 Triangulation is defined by Flick as “the observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points.” See Uwe Flick, “Triangulation,” in *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 306. Yin emphasizes the idea of multiple sources of evidence for corroborating data. He states that “the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration” (Yin, *Case Study*, Kindle loc. 2435).

118 *Ibid.*, 645–655.

119 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 44; de Wit, “Intercultural Bible reading,” 477–492; de Wit, “It Should Be Burned,” 54–57. Similarly, Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–398;

the “doctrinal keys” that often strongly influence the reading of biblical texts. Salvation is one of the important “doctrinal keys.”¹²⁰ Though church affiliation and salvation are rather vague concepts, this general idea needs to be noted. Further, the earlier interpretations and their effects guide both doctrinal keys and the interpretation of biblical passages.¹²¹

In order to take into consideration the influence of doctrinal keys, this case study will select communities that come from church traditions that are similar. This will help to rule out the effects of church affiliation when the cases are compared. Second, when a community reads biblical texts, socio-economic status and culture affect the creation of meaning, though these seem to be subordinated to the prevailing doctrinal keys.¹²² Third, ordinary readers generally focus on the immediate relevance of the Bible to their present needs,¹²³ and they often confirm their previously held beliefs.¹²⁴

According to Ricoeur, texts contain a reservoir of meaning and are not exhausted by the reconstruction of authorial intent or historical meaning;¹²⁵ therefore, any reader (or group of readers) may potentially bring forward new aspects of the texts.¹²⁶ Some scholars have pointed out that marginalized groups that have experienced poverty and oppression first-hand perceive the world from the viewpoint of powerlessness and exclusion.¹²⁷ Therefore, they are more sensitive to the issues of injustice, power relations, and status

Edgar López, “Intercultural Bible Reading by Catholic Groups of Bogota,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible Amsterdam* (eds. H. de Wit et al.; Vrije Universiteit: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 142–160; less so Village, *The Bible and Lay People*.

120 Conradie, “A Preface on Empirical,” 333–339.

121 Gadamer has particularly pointed out the historical condition of all interpretations and how the interpreter is part of “a single historical horizon” even when reading texts from the past (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* [2nd rev. ed.; Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall; New York: Crossroads, 1989], 304). He also states that “in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work” (Ibid., 301).

122 Conradie and Jonker, “Bible Study,” 381–392.

123 de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 8–10.

124 Conradie, “A Preface on Empirical,” 333–339.

125 Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 71–95, especially 75–79, 87–88.

126 Ricoeur, “Metaphor and the Main Problem,” 104–105; de Wit, “Through the Eyes,” 14–16.

127 Stanley Eitzen and Kelly Eitzen Smith, *Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom* (Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003) 60–84; Rhoads “Introduction,” in *The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective* (eds. D. Rhoads. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1–27.

dynamics in the real world as well as (potentially) in the biblical texts.¹²⁸ For example, the worldview of the indigenous cultures of Bolivia is characterized by the principle of reciprocity as well as the interconnectedness of all things. Also, the idea of the neutrality of money is foreign to many indigenous communities of Bolivia. These ideas and practices are closer to the views of the ancient peoples of the first centuries CE than the (post-)modern Western ideas.¹²⁹ The idea of reciprocity is generally thought to be an important concept in the cultural matrix of the first-century Mediterranean world¹³⁰ but, according to Chambe, this is also a crucial aspect of the cultural and theological practices of the marginalized Pentecostal communities, even within the urban setting.¹³¹ While the use and interpretative practices of ordinary readers are interesting in themselves, these dimensions of social and cross-cultural fertilization have potential to bring new insights into the general interpretative process and also provide new insights into the ancient texts.¹³²

In addition to the above, there are a number of more practical considerations that affect the construction and the results of the case study. These include the exact involvement of the researcher. That is, to what extent does the researcher probe the meaning of the biblical texts? What questions are asked of the group and to what extent do they “lead” to certain types of answers? What is the group’s previous experience in group Bible study? To what extent do the participants trust the researcher and/or the contextual Bible study process? In terms of the last question, James Scott has highlighted the difficulties of penetrating through the “hidden transcript” of the marginalized communities.¹³³ Finally, the criteria for picking the community are important in empirical research, and sampling methods vary.

More specifically, this case study consists of investigating the biblical interpretation of the two distinct communities in *departamento de Santa Cruz*,

128 Rhoads, “Introduction,” 1–27; David Rhoads, “Intercultural Bible Study: Three Principles,” in *The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective* (ed. D. Rhoads; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 223–231.

129 Estermann, *Filosofía Andina*, 145–148, 217–223; Ekkehard W. Stegemann, and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus Movement. A Social History of Its First Century* (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 7–52.

130 Halvor Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom. Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke’s Gospel* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1988), 34–74; Miriam Griffin, “*De Beneficiis* and the Roman Society” *JRS* 93 (2003): 92–113.

131 Chambe, *Teología Pentecostal*, 187–190.

132 This is suggested by particularly by Smith-Christopher, “Introduction,” 11–22.

133 See West’s application of Scott to group Bible studies (*The Academy of the Poor*, 34–62).

Bolivia.¹³⁴ The communities are church groups from two distinct social locations. One is located in a low-income and marginalized area of the city of Santa Cruz, and the other is in the privileged or proportionally rich area. Available literature, statistics, and local experts were used to determine the exact areas and locales of the communities.¹³⁵ This thus highlights my agenda as a researcher rather than of the communities, though access to material resources and benefit from God is undoubtedly at the forefront of many marginalized communities in Bolivia and elsewhere. Generally, it is expected that the socio-economic situation of the communities will influence the interpretation of the texts, though openness to emerging data and new hypotheses is retained throughout the study.

The judgmental sampling method was used to pick communities for the study. There was one poor/marginalized community and one socio-economically privileged community that participated in the extensive qualitative case study. Both churches come from newer independent Pentecostal traditions (of neo-Pentecostal type) and one was part of a larger conglomeration of churches with a denominational structure. The reason for focusing on Pentecostal churches is as follows: Pentecostal churches in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America have attracted adherents particularly from the poor and marginalized communities. There is an emerging trend, however, of middle and upper middle class Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches as well.¹³⁶ Finally, no empirical study has been conducted to my knowledge on the biblical interpretation of Latin American Pentecostal churches. Thus, in the selection of the churches, three criteria were used in particular: 1) community's socio-economic location, 2) church affiliation within the Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal axis, and 3) access to the community; that is, availability and willingness to participate in the study and the relative physical proximity to where I lived.

134 Bolivia is divided into nine *departamentos*. This Spanish word is usually translated as department in English.

135 In addition to discussions with the local church leaders and staff at UEB, the most comprehensive statistics were available in Guillermo D. Vela, et al.; *Pobreza urbana. Niveles de Incidencia en la Ciudad de Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (Santa Cruz, Bolivia: Fundación PAP, 2006).

136 Mariz notes the situation in Brazil and emphasizes the difference between the level of poverty and marginality between basic ecclesiastic communities and Pentecostal churches. The CEBS often do not attract the most needy of the poor, while Pentecostal churches do (*Coping with Poverty*, 31–59). Wingeier-Rayo (*Where are the Poor?*, 140–150, especially p. 142) observes similarly in his case study in Mexico. For the middle class Pentecostal churches in Bolivia, see Wightman, *New Bolivians*.

The actual data collection methods were focus groups¹³⁷ in the form of interactive Bible studies (i.e., contextual Bible study model),¹³⁸ participatory observation,¹³⁹ and qualitative interviews of key persons within the communities.¹⁴⁰ The interactive Bible study model, which formed the main data collection tool, followed broadly the contextual Bible study model (CBS) as created and developed by Latin American and African organic biblical scholars. A brief presentation of these models is given before moving further.

2.2.1.1 Contextual Bible Study Model

In its original format, the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) model first emerged in Latin America, though the term is primarily used in South African and European contexts. As discussed earlier, many scholars trace the origins of liberation theology to the student movements and communal Bible study groups in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁴¹ The excitement and revolutionary context of these Bible discussion groups seem to have been one of the main catalysts for what is now known as the contextual Bible study format.¹⁴² The second catalyst comes from South Africa, where a handful of organic biblical scholars started to read the Bible with ordinary readers during the apartheid era of the 1980s.¹⁴³ With the lead of Gerald West at the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB), now known as the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research (UCBTCD), the CBS movement was

137 On focus groups, see Norman Denzin and Katherine Ryan, "Qualitative Methodology (Including Focus Groups)," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology* (eds. W. Outhwaite and W. Turner; London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 578–594.

138 The exact type of Bible study method used is outlined later in the chapter.

139 Sara Delamont, "Ethnography and Participant Observation," in *Qualitative Research Practice* (eds. C. Seale; London: SAGE Publications, 2004), 205–215.

140 Jennifer Mason, "Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening, and Interpreting," in *Qualitative Research in Action* (eds. T. May; London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 226–239. In addition to these, a short questionnaire that includes questions about the participants' demographics and social status are used.

141 Dawson, "Origins and Character," 140–142; Gonzáles and Gonzáles, *Christianity in Latin America* 243–269; Miguéz, "Lectura latinoamericana," 77–99.

142 Riches also refers to the Brazilian experience (John Riches, *What is Contextual Bible Study: A Practical Guide with Group Studies for Advent and Lent* [London: SPCK, 2010], 23–25; 30). The current CBS format in its various expressions is hardly the same as it originally used to be. Perhaps the earliest written expression is Ernesto Cardenal's recorded Bible studies with *Solentiname* peasants.

143 Gerald O. West, "Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Resource for Reclaiming and Regaining Land, Dignity and Identity," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (eds. G. West and M. Dube; Boston: Brill, 2000), 595–597.

brought to Scotland where it took a slightly different mode of expression while retaining its main aspects.¹⁴⁴ In the U.S., Bob Ekblad from *Tierra Nueva* ecumenical ministry has been one of the leading figures of CBS.¹⁴⁵ David Rhoads has also included a section in his anthology on Revelation that incorporated a short contextual Bible study manual emphasizing the social location and culture of the interpreter.¹⁴⁶ Finally, de Wit in his *Through the Eyes of Another* empirical Bible reading project uses a somewhat similar format as a suggestion to engage the facilitators with their respective groups.¹⁴⁷

The distinctive nature of the CBS approach comes out clearly when it is compared with the traditional Bible study format, which generally is clergy led and attempts to impart doctrinal and ethical content to the passive congregants. It generally follows the banking method where the teacher (usually clergy) is the expert and the students (lay people) are passive receptacles of information. It may involve interaction or it may be direct preaching, as was the case in some Pentecostal churches that I have observed in Latin America and elsewhere.¹⁴⁸

According to a survey of Bible study methods in the West of Scotland, two Bible study approaches were generally used among the Anglican congregations. Some used William Barclay's liberal evangelical *Daily Bible Study* book that helped bridge the ancient context of the Bible and the daily experience of the readers. The other, used mainly by the more conservative groups, focused on the minister who gave an exposition of a particular passage followed by questions for clarification. As Riches notes, both of these were primarily teaching opportunities for the minister.¹⁴⁹ The traditional banking method seems to prevail and focus on doctrinal and ethical matters.

The CBS approach, on the other hand, not only acknowledges the contextual nature of Bible reading but embraces and focuses on a particular context.¹⁵⁰

144 Riches, *What is Contextual*, 4–22.

145 Ekblad, *Reading the Bible*, vii–viii, 2–9.

146 Rhoads, “Intercultural Bible Study,” 223–248.

147 Hans de Wit, *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Bible Reading. Manual for Facilitators and Reporters* (n.p.; Amsterdam: VU University, 2008).

148 Mligo notes that in Africa, a model called Small Christian Communities (SCC) has operated semi-engaged Bible studies where the facilitator asks questions from the participants. In the end, however, he notes that the power dynamics have changed little and genuine engagement with the participants is limited (Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 142–145). I visited some churches in Bolivia where this kind of semi-interactive style was used both during sermons and weekday Bible studies.

149 Riches, *What is Contextual*, Kindle loc. 133–148.

150 West, “Contextual Bible Study,” 595.

It engages the participants in a dialogue with the text, its socio-historical context, and the present day situation of the readers. Thus, current concerns can be addressed in light of biblical texts. It is also facilitated rather than taught. Further, the CBS approach does not presuppose any particular faith or doctrinal position, and the participants are generally free to criticize aspects of the text that may be unacceptable today, such as slavery, for example, or the subjugation of women.¹⁵¹ Still, spirituality is an important aspect of CBS, though it is generally not defined with any specificity.¹⁵²

As mentioned above, there are regional differences between the CBS approaches. Latin American and South African CBS approaches focus more on socio-political engagement, whereas the European expression emphasizes the growth and transformation of individuals.¹⁵³ This aspect probably reflects the socio-cultural matrix of the contexts.¹⁵⁴ It probably also has to do somewhat with the church traditions in which these methods were developed.

The basic steps that many of the CBS manuals advocate is a combination of reflection on the contextual realities and engaging biblical texts, which is generally followed by an action plan of some sort. Mesters, West, and Ekblad

151 Riches, *What is Contextual*, 35–37.

152 Mesters' manual is interesting in a sense that the opening paragraph introduces the manual as a book of *lectura orante*. It emphasizes the spiritual nature of the Bible studies and the importance of the Holy Spirit to read the "signs of the times" (Mesters, *Querido Teófilo*, 5). If one were to make deductions based on this opening, one would probably conclude that the manual has nothing to do with emancipation or socio-political realities. The content of the manual, however, proves the contrary, as Mesters engages many of the traditional topics of liberation theology. This example shows what many Latin American theologians (and perhaps many other socially engaged biblical scholars) consider what is "spiritual"—that is, it is impossible to distinguish between "spiritual," "socio-political," and "secular" spheres of reality.

153 Riches, *What is Contextual*, 12, 29–30. This is clearly seen in the formulation of CBS questions. Whereas the manual written by Riches (and his associates) brings up socially relevant topics in only a few studies (Riches, *What is Contextual*, 91–111), the questions posed by Mesters and West in their respective manuals betray a high concentration of questions that directly engage socio-political realities. See Mesters, *Querido Teófilo*, 15–188; Gerald O. West, "Doing Contextual Bible Study. A Resource Manual," (2007): 34–115. Cited 3 February 2009. Online: <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Practical.aspx>.

154 It is notable that during the early phase of Scottish CBS there was a shift in social location. CBS was "mainstreamed" and thus the reading audience became largely middleclass churchgoers rather than the working class and marginalized of the earlier phase (Riches, *What is Contextual*, 12). Thus, there seems to have been domestication in the CBS process that led a more individualistic and spiritualistic leaning in contrast to what it was in the beginning when introduced by Gerald West.

follow the See-Judge-Act model in their approach.¹⁵⁵ Further, while the focus is generally “on the text” and “in front of the text,” the facilitator may bring tools that provide additional information regarding socio-historical context and literary structure of the passage. The hermeneutical circulation generally moves from lived reality to the text and back to the lived experience. CBS is also closely linked to “reading with” approach and is at times synonymous with it. Nevertheless, the CBS facilitator need not be a scholar or theologically educated person, which is usually the case with the “reading with” approach. Overall, there is relatively little critical reflection on the CBS approach. One of the debated aspects of CBS revolves around group facilitation, but the usefulness of CBS as a research tool has also been noted though only briefly.

Mligo has pointed out some of the difficulties in the power dynamics and the concept of “dialogue” in the CBS process. His critique focuses mainly on the work of Gerald West and the Ujamaa Center. He highlights the inherent differences in power, emotion, and experiences between trained and non-trained readers. He asks how those who experience daily suffering and those who employ critical tools (academically trained) are able to interact on an equal level, and how can the two emerge with meaning that belongs to both?¹⁵⁶ There seems to be an unbridgeable power gap that is not easily reconciled and which undoubtedly affects the CBS process. Mligo also notes that the concept of “dialogue” is problematic. If CBS claims to operate as a “dialogical reading,” then the ordinary and scholarly readers need to engage in genuine dialogue. This, however, is hardly the case in the CBS method where the scholar poses the questions to the text and leads the process.¹⁵⁷ CBS is facilitated using a participant centered method that allows an exchange of ideas among the participants—and to a limited extent by the facilitator. Finally, Mligo points out, correctly in my view, that the educator is hardly an equal dialogue partner¹⁵⁸ in the sense that Paulo Freire has proposed. The role of the educator

155 Mesters does not explicitly mention the see-judge-act method in his manual though it is rather assumed. West, “Doing Contextual” 4–12; Ekblad, *Reading The Bible*, 1–9.

156 Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 149.

157 Ibid., 154–159.

158 The “dialogue” or partnership problem extends to an institutional level at the Ujamaa Center. According to Ujamaa’s CBS manual, the communities are the ones who need to invite the staff to conduct the Bible studies. West states they prefer organized groups that are not “intimidated by the presence of the Ujamaa Centre staff and their resources, groups which have a fairly clear idea of what they want from a particular project and groups which know what resources they themselves bring to the Contextual Bible Study process.” (West, “Doing Contextual,” 6). This idea of “being called to come down and help” does seem to reinforce the distance between the expert and the “needy,” as Mligo (*Jesus*

is to empower the participants rather than to overpower them,¹⁵⁹ though this is hardly something with which West would disagree.

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the power and knowledge of the marginalized groups, as they are able to “talk back.” Perhaps more emphasis should be put on the domains of knowledge and the spaces that both the scholar and the community of ordinary readers occupy. Few have noted that when a scholar is engaged in a CBS process, s/he is usually alone¹⁶⁰ (albeit with one’s critical tools) with a *community* of contextual readers. This community of contextual experts can be highly submissive or subversive toward the facilitator depending on the group’s cultural/ecclesial tradition and the perceived relationship with the scholar (and his/her perceived agenda). For example, some marginalized (and privileged) Pentecostal groups show little respect for academicians or the academic study of the Bible; some may even label it diabolic.¹⁶¹ In this kind of context, the community is clearly able to “talk back” by referring to their experience of the Spirit as a higher level of knowledge than mere human views that the scholar attempts to facilitate (or impose).¹⁶² In a conflict situation, the group may potentially marginalize or even demonize the scholar. In a less obvious disagreement, the marginalized may employ a range of other tactics. The group, or individuals within it, can also appeal to a unique experience that is beyond the scholar’s domain of experience (thus knowledge).¹⁶³ In conclusion, both the community and the scholar have their domains of knowledge and expertise and occupy their respective space.¹⁶⁴

and the Stigmatized, 155–157) correctly points out, but it also seems to exclude many poor and marginalized groups that are less organized and thus more vulnerable.

159 Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized*, 161.

160 The CBS method in Scotland proposes the use of two facilitators (Riches, *What is Contextual*, 12). Nevertheless, the setting seems to be rather a middleclass church group of the West and the aim is to have genuinely two different opinions.

161 For an example of attitudes of Pentecostals toward education, see Anderson, *An Introduction*, 243–260.

162 Cf. Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 186–187, 190–197.

163 Anyone who has worked in a place like jail, drug rehab, or the like can testify how effectively “those who have gone through it (the experience)” can resist the “therapist,” “scholar,” or “pastor/priest,” even if the expert is otherwise highly knowledgeable about the subject matter and contextual realities. This is a tactic of resistance that can be employed both in open defiance and with subtle hints. For resistance of the inmates, see a classic in criminal thinking: Samuel Yochelson and Stanton E. Samenow, *The Criminal Personality. Vol. 11: The Change Process* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1985).

164 Of course it is possible that an individual occupies two spaces at the same time to some extent, though this seems to be less common.

Though the scholar is often in a position of power due to her/his education and critical tools (and status as facilitator), it does not mean that the community engaged in CBS is powerless. Additionally, though it is not necessary to agree or come to an interpretative agreement for CBS to be successful, a level of mutual understanding and trust are necessary prerequisites for a positive CBS experience.

More difficult to evaluate is the aspect of social transformation that CBS is claimed to accomplish.¹⁶⁵ While I do not doubt that CBS could spur communities to action, I do wonder whether a single Bible study can lead to far reaching results. This is particularly the case when the CBS deals with a topic that has a heavy ideological and cultural package, such as, for example, gender roles. Even if the transformation does take place, it is probably an exception rather than a norm, and one may justly wonder about the longevity of the changes.¹⁶⁶ The Latin American CEB experience is instructive. While it can hardly be doubted that the communal Bible studies were (and are) transformative to some extent under certain conditions,¹⁶⁷ it seems that one of the decisive factors is the longevity of the communal engagement as people read and reflect on the texts for weeks, months, and even years.¹⁶⁸ In addition, the community's openness in relation to a specific subject and their prior experience with the CBS format undoubtedly play a part. Finally, the exact factors contributing to the transformation and the actual outcome of the transformation are difficult to measure and evaluate. Were the effects positive and/or negative—and for whom?¹⁶⁹ To what extent was the transformation brought about by the general

165 For example, West, "Contextual Bible Study," 595–610.

166 Cf. Sibeko and Haddad tell of the women who take action as a result of one CBS ("Reading the Bible" 83–92).

167 de Wit has pointed out the lack of empirical research on actual transformative effects of the Bible in Latin America ("Through the Eyes," 41–42). His most recent publication, however, demonstrates that reading of a certain text may be a catalyst for transformation and change under certain conditions (de Wit, "Regados por los cerros," 361–404). The transformation in de Wit's research is particularly connected to the intercultural Bible reading experience and not just to CBS.

168 In Latin America, one can also see a number of unique historical processes that converge between the 1950s and the 1980s, among which one of the most important is perhaps the general revolutionary atmosphere of the continent.

169 While many have praised Ernesto Cardenal's pioneering work among the Solentiname peasants, few have noted that in the end the community dispersed and some of the participants engaged in the armed resistance against the Somoza regime (Cardenal, *El Evangelio en Solentiname* [with Introduction], 11–16). I do not doubt the lasting importance of the Solentiname Bible studies, but I have found few in-depth engagements with

socio-political and revolutionary climate within the society or community? What role did the Bible play in this larger framework? Of course, these questions are difficult to answer with any precision. Perhaps it may be said that, at least for some groups, the Bible has been (and is) a source of inspiration and thus may contribute to the transformation of people's lives. At the least, this hypothesis should not be ruled out. Yet, as mentioned, there is precious little empirical research that has investigated the interaction between Bible reading and social transformation with any specificity.

The final issue is the suitability of the CBS approach as a research tool in an empirical study—the scholarly opinions vary but most tend to support the notion. While West has criticized the use of CBS as a research tool,¹⁷⁰ others have noted approval¹⁷¹ or used it successfully.¹⁷² Mlingo's in-depth research project of the HIV-AIDS stigmatized people in Tanzania successfully applied the CBS approach in an empirical research project.¹⁷³

Perhaps the most relevant issue in this is the objective to which the CBS approach is used. One needs to know the limitations of CBS as a research tool, and how its use is different as a research tool as opposed to a more pragmatically oriented contextual Bible study usage. CBS as a data-gathering tool can hardly be objective or disinterested as such. The selection and emphases of the theme(s), the role of the facilitator, and the way questions are posed are all "flavors" that the researcher brings to the process. The data analysis process and method is not free of bias either but influences the kind of results one obtains. Further, in a research project, the role of the facilitator is generally limited to posing questions and giving some possible background information on a given passage.¹⁷⁴

The CBS approach that is used in this study does not primarily attempt to achieve transformation or move the participants to concrete action, though one or both may happen as the group reflects on the passages and ponders the

it. An exception is Segovia's short presentation on the topic at the 2010 SBL conference in New Orleans; see also Blount, *Cultural Interpretation*, Kindle loc. 571–767.

170 Gerald O. West, "Contextualised Reading of the Bible," *Analecta Bruxellensia* 11 (2006): 131–142, esp. 142.

171 Klerk has suggested particularly the Scottish format of CBS ("An Indonesian Experience," 173–175).

172 de Wit suggest a protocol similar to CBS in his research project for group facilitators (de Wit, "Through the Eyes"). The most extended individual research project using CBS, albeit in a modified format, is that of Mlingo in *Jesus and the Stigmatized*.

173 Ibid.

174 West mentions only what he calls directive and less directive facilitation styles and prefers the latter, while Ekblad opts for more directive style (West, "Artful Facilitation," 211–237).

questions. This approach in my opinion gives more room for the participants' voice to emerge without excessive influence of the researcher. Because of this, I would be hesitant to call my approach "dialogical" in a proper sense. My role as a researcher is to ask questions and facilitate the group process, not necessarily to have a mutually enriching dialogue with the group. In this framework, CBS is a practical, methodological tool that helps facilitate group interaction as well as frame the interviewing and data-gathering process.

From a social-scientific perspective, CBS acts as a similar research tool to the focus group. As such, it is like a semi-structured group interview that explores the views of a select group using both structured questions and spontaneous probing questions. In sum, for the purpose of this study, CBS is an appropriate research tool, and the details of how it will be employed are explained in the next section.

2.2.1.2 Research Protocol

As discussed above, the facilitator in the CBS model plays an important role. Since CBS focuses on asking questions about the text itself (among other things) and its appropriation, it is clear that the focus is on the text. While this may be somewhat obvious for Western biblical scholars, it is not quite so obvious for people in oral or semi-oral cultures. The hermeneutical strategy and appropriation of the Bible in many (particularly Pentecostal and AIC) traditions rarely focus on exegesis or detailed analysis of biblical passages.¹⁷⁵ This is particularly true in formal church services.¹⁷⁶ Small group Bible studies are sometimes clergy led and other times led by lay leaders. In preaching and liturgy, it is more common to emphasize one verse or even just a short phrase, or a word in a given passage.¹⁷⁷ Thus, conducting a Bible study that emphasizes a study of a long biblical passage and conducting an open-ended discussion regarding it might be strange to some. Nevertheless, I think that the CBS method, despite its weaknesses, is a good tool for both dialogical reading of the

175 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 190–192; Rosas, "Textos bíblicos," 43–51; Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 173–182. There are exceptions though. In my observations in Bolivia, the Sunday celebrations focus particularly on shorter biblical citations, whereas Bible studies (often conducted on Wednesday nights) may include larger blocks of materials. Also, some churches of the conservative evangelical tradition focus on larger blocks of the Bible.

176 Hollenweger (*The Pentecostalism*, 18–24) has pointed out the black roots of Pentecostal liturgy as well as its fundamentally oral character.

177 Chambe, *Teología pentecostal*, 190–192; Rosas, "Textos bíblicos," 43–51; Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 173–182.

Bible in general and, in a modified version, for structured empirical research in particular.

The interactive Bible studies of this project were conducted on the following passages: Luke 6:17–26; 12:22–34; 14:1, 12–14; 16:19–31; and 19:1–10.¹⁷⁸ One study session was devoted to each passage, with each session lasting from forty to ninety minutes. The group sizes ranged from eight to sixteen people to help facilitate a safe and interactive group process. The studies were conducted on a weekly basis, when possible, so that the participants were able to utilize previous studies to interpret the subsequent passages if they so chose. The role of the researcher was to facilitate the interactive group process by asking previously prepared questions, using probing questions, stimulating conversation, and encouraging responses. On some occasions, a short clarification of the historical context or literary structure of the text was given, though many times it seemed rather irrelevant to the participants.¹⁷⁹

The following basic structure was used in the group Bible study: the facilitator initiated the reading process by asking each participant to read the passage on their own. After this, a volunteer was chosen by the group to read the same passage out loud to everybody.¹⁸⁰ The facilitator then initiated the process of interpretation with one or more of the following question(s): “What is this passage about?” “What jumps out of the page?” “Is there something that particularly strikes you in this passage?” This initial probing was meant to stimulate

178 The initial selection included three more passages (1:46–56; 4:16–21; 8:40–56). However, I decided to leave these passages out of the detailed analysis for the following reasons: first, the amount of data would have become too large in the confines of this study; and second, the initial study sessions ended up becoming more like an orientation to CBS method and a place to get to know each other.

179 All of the passages except 16:19–31 had short explanatory notes or cross-references. In 6:20–26, the meaning of “blessed” was briefly explicated and the declarative nature of the beatitudes and woes; in 12:22–34, the groups were asked to read the previous section (12:13–21) and see whether that had any bearing on the meaning of the passage; in 14:12–14, it was briefly pointed out that the elite in Jesus’ time relied on exchanging favors to strengthen social and economic bonds and that the rest, practically speaking, were excluded from this. Both groups grasped the point before the facilitator was able to articulate it. In 19:1–10, the Roman system of tax farming was briefly explained. It needs to be noted that on some occasions the participants were partially aware of the historical background materials before it was given (esp. 14:12–14; 19:1–10).

180 Most participants used Reina Valera (RV) version of the Bible, though participants were free to use any version that they had available. Some for example used *Nueva Version Internacional* (NVI).

spontaneous understanding of the text and discussion of the meaning of the passage from the perspective of participants' own concerns and life context. Once the participants had nothing more to say, CBS moved to the next phase.

In the second phase, the focus shifted more closely to the text and its meaning. The facilitator asked participants to divide into small groups and then placed the previously prepared questions on the wall to be discussed in small buzz-groups. After five to twenty minutes, the groups shared their findings. The participants were also encouraged to engage in dialogue about each other's comments. In this section, the facilitator briefly clarified the literary structure of the text or gave relevant socio-historical background information about the text. The questions in the second phase focused mainly on the narrative structure, characters in the narrative, and the specific aspects found in each particular passage.

The third phase focused specifically on the "forward" aspect of the text; that is, its appropriation.¹⁸¹ Thus, the hermeneutical circulation of the CBS started from the life context of the community, spiraled to the text, and then cycled back to the community in front of the text. As became apparent in the review of CBS approaches, this basic approach has been used in Latin America and Africa for some decades.

The following issues played a role in the preparation phase of the CBS questions. First, a preliminary exegesis was conducted of the biblical texts that dealt with poverty, wealth, and marginalization in Luke's gospel. This made it possible to find relevant themes and formulate questions. Further preliminary research on the theoretical and practical aspects of poverty and marginalization in Latin America (and elsewhere) helped in developing more in-depth understanding of the relevant issues. There is no doubt that research into theoretical aspects of poverty and marginalization as well as my experiences working with the present-day poor helped frame many of the questions. Nevertheless, some questions, themes, and even the selection of the texts had to be reformulated during the pilot project and in the initial phases of the actual study.¹⁸² Finally, before launching the primary research segment, a pilot study was conducted in order to anticipate and prepare for potential problems,

181 As expected, the participants did not neatly follow the dichotomy between historical/textual questions followed by the appropriation. Nevertheless, this division of questions helped participants focus on the actual text in addition to their own life situation.

182 The initial pilot studies were conducted with one socio-economically marginalized and one privileged group, which alerted to the differences of dynamics in each group. The pilot studies were conducted between October 2011 and February 2012 and included the reading of the above-mentioned Lucan texts with the communities.

better understand the group dynamics within a marginalized community, and sharpen field research skills.

2.2.1.3 Ethical Issues in Empirical Hermeneutics and the Case Study

Since the case study was partially conducted in a marginalized community and in a different cultural setting than my own, several important ethical issues needed to be considered.¹⁸³ Trust and confidentiality are essential since the case study explored people's religious views in depth. Negotiating one's way into a particular (marginalized) community for research purposes and building trust can be tricky, especially in a culture other than one's own. In a cross-cultural setting, a plethora of unspoken expectations and assumptions often lie beneath the initial courtesies and explicit words and gestures.¹⁸⁴ Since trust entails mutuality and includes avoidance of harm, the aim and scope of the research needed to be spelled out clearly.

Obtaining informed consent for the research is closely related to the idea of trust. Anne Ryen states that informed consent means "research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time."¹⁸⁵ In a North American context, informed consent often means signing a detailed "consent" form, where the participants agree to participate in the study out of his/her own free will and have the right to withdraw at any moment without adverse consequences. Informed consent is supposed to rule out deception and covert attempts to conduct research. While this seems simple at first, some of the issues may be rather complex, especially in non-Western settings and when working with marginalized communities.

183 Essential aspects of ethical research are trust, confidentiality, and informed consent. Another way of defining the ethical aspect is using the concepts of respect, beneficence, and justice. See Sarah R. Curran, "Research Ethics are Essential: Ethical Considerations for Research in Cross-Cultural Settings," in *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods* (eds. E. Perecman and S. Curran; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 202.

184 Some of the ways these can bring about ethical dilemmas are well illustrated by Curran, "Research Ethics," 197–216; see also Gerald Mohatt and Lisa Thomas, "I Wonder, Why Would You Do It That Way?": Ethical Dilemmas in Doing Participatory Research With Alaska Native Communities," in *The Handbook of Ethical Research with Ethnocultural Populations & Communities* (eds. J. Trimble and C. Fisher; Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2006), 93–112.

185 Anne Ryen, "Ethical Issues," in *Qualitative Research Practice* (ed. C. Seale; London: SAGE Publications, 2004), 218–219.

The idea of informing research subjects about the “nature of research” can be complicated for several reasons. First, participants who are not familiar with Western academic research, and perhaps cannot even read, may find it difficult to understand the objectives and the content of the research. The issue becomes even more complex if the researcher does not start with a clearly defined topic in mind, as is the case sometimes with ethnographic studies. Thus, it is difficult to spell out the details to the participants. The deeper issue then is, what are participants consenting and to what extent are they informed?¹⁸⁶ As well, the whole idea of signing a written “consent” form is not without problems. The mere presentation of written forms may lead to alienation and enforce the existing differences rather than building trust. Their inclusion usually assumes that the participants have positive experiences with signed contracts.¹⁸⁷

Closely related to the above issues regarding cultural practices is the issue of representation. At a deeper level, this includes various theories about the relationship between language and social reality. Proponents of naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism, and postmodernism construct social reality differently.¹⁸⁸ Further, postcolonial criticism has highlighted the colonial mode of representation, and feminists have brought to attention the patriarchal distortions.¹⁸⁹ On a more practical level, the issue involves a question of how the researcher may or may not represent faithfully and accurately the participants, especially when the research involves crossing socio-cultural and language boundaries.

An ethical issue that cannot be ignored while conducting research in the two-thirds world is the gap, both economic and educational, between the participants and the researcher.¹⁹⁰ As Sarah Curran notes, “[w]henever personal relationships are defined by differential access to resources, rights, entitlements, and obligations, then power structures emerge, and with them comes

186 Ryen, “Ethical Issues,” 218–233.

187 Ibid.

188 Ryen, “Ethical Issues,” 230–233.

189 For postcolonial theory, see R. Sugirtharajah, “Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. Sugirtharajah; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Kindle loc. 119–567; for feminist theory, see Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethics: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 67–81. See also Babbie (*The Practice*, 32–59) for a presentation of various theories.

190 Ian Shaw, “Ethics and the Practice of Qualitative Research,” in *SAGE Qualitative Research Methods* (eds. P. Atkinson & S. Delamont; London: SAGE Publications, 2010), 401–412.

the possible emergence of conflicts of interest and justice concerns.”¹⁹¹ It is sometimes the case, as is in this study, that the participants are poor or perhaps indigent, and sometimes have quite low educational levels. How can the researcher conduct the investigation when such a power inequality exists? Is it enough for the researcher to acknowledge this gap and try to build trust with the participants in hope of negotiating roles that allow more honest exchange or gathering of ideas? Or, should specific strategies be adopted to overcome or reduce the power difference? If so, what should they be and how should they be executed?

It is hardly possible to ignore the challenge of social justice,¹⁹² be that extreme poverty or lack of available health care in the context of two thirds of the world. Regarding social justice dilemmas, how should the researcher respond to extreme poverty or corruption?¹⁹³ What about when violence or war is present? Can the researcher ignore acute human misery and extreme poverty while extracting “data” from the “participants” in the name of science? Should the participants be paid, as is often the case in social science research in the U.S.?¹⁹⁴ How does the aforementioned issue relate to the trust between the researcher and the participants, especially as each side understands it from the perspective of their own cultural values?

While many of the ethical issues required careful thought during the course of this study, I do not claim to have found conclusive solutions for the ethical dilemmas mentioned above. After all, as Gerald Mohatt and Lisa Thomas have noted, ethics in research should not be considered in either/or terms, as ethical or non-ethical; rather, it is more likely to be more ethical or less ethical.¹⁹⁵ Since this involved many ethical issues, and because I am committed to ethical practices, I actively sought acceptable solutions. Among the great difficulties of research ethics in a cross-cultural setting are the unexpected ethical issues that may emerge without warning.¹⁹⁶ These can pose unforeseen challenges that can only be reflected on afterwards. In that case, the only thing that the researcher can do is to anticipate some of the potential problems. Nevertheless, as Curran states, “it is difficult to prepare for ethical dilemmas that may arise

191 Curran, “Research Ethics,” 209.

192 According to Curran, this is the least explored area in the ethics of research (“Research Ethics,” 203–209).

193 Shaw, “Ethics and the Practice,” 401–412.

194 Curran, “Research Ethics,” 197–216.

195 Mohatt and Thomas, “I Wonder Why,” 94–95.

196 Curran, “Research Ethics,” 197–198.

during fieldwork, and there may be instances that could not have been anticipated with any amount of training.”¹⁹⁷

2.2.1.4 Toward an Ethical Case Study

Since there are no universally accepted norms for qualitative research ethics, my intent was to apply the basic guidelines of trust, confidentiality, and informed consent in social science throughout this study.¹⁹⁸ Two issues that required special attention were the fact that the project’s cases involved marginalized communities and were done in a cultural setting other than the my own. As a starting point, my prior contact with Universidad Evangélica Boliviana (UEB) and other contacts in Bolivia helped establish trust with the communities that were studied. In a sense, these mediators were invaluable. Nevertheless, I still needed to establish trust with the leaders and people who were directly involved in the study, none of whom had any prior contact with me.

Overall, I had the advantage of having mediators in UEB within its extensive network of associates. It was fairly easy to establish cordial relations with local churches. I was either introduced or introduced myself as *misionero*¹⁹⁹ who was conducting research and teaching in UEB. Unlike much of the Western thinking, in many cross-cultural settings, the roles of the researcher and his/her private person may be blurry.²⁰⁰ That is one of the reasons why I did not try to evade the title *misionero*. It seemed to me that, at least on some occasions, it worked to my advantage rather than against me by granting access and building trust.²⁰¹

197 Ibid., 198.

198 I also follow broadly the recommendations by the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway as set forth in *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities* (Ragnvald Kalleberg et al. 2006, esp. 8–28. Cited 2 February 2013. Online <http://www.etikkom.no/English/NESH/guidelines>).

199 *Misionero* means missionary. Sometimes this title was given to me even when I would have preferred another title; nevertheless, since the institution that I was associated with preferred to give me that title, I accepted it. Unlike in much of the secularized west, the term carries a positive connotation particularly within Evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches. It is difficult to know exactly how my self-representation influenced the research. I introduced the Contextual Bible study as a mode of dialogue where I would not be teaching. I told the participants that I am interested in their views and that I believe everybody has something to contribute.

200 Ryen, “Ethical Issues,” 429–442; 2004, 218–233.

201 The disadvantage with accepting this title and being associated with a Christian university could have been an insistence of bombarding me with questions and considering

The fact that I was not only but part of the broader Pentecostal church tradition, albeit in Finnish and North American contexts, the Pentecostal Bolivian groups studied here certainly influenced, in part, my perspective on the research. As such, Pentecostal liturgy, spirituality, practices, general ecclesiastical hierarchy, and vocabulary were not strange or alien to me, even though Bolivia undoubtedly is substantially different culturally from my personal context. In spite of the cultural differences, the Pentecostal environment helped me to be comfortable from the outset and enabled me to negotiate my role in the community and avoid reacting to comments and practices that might have made a non-Pentecostal uncomfortable.²⁰² It is possible, however, that the similarity of church traditions and my prior visits to Bolivia led to blind spots and assumptions about other things. On the whole, I made a concerted effort to keep an objective stance and ask questions of clarification even when I assumed that I understood an issue.

Before starting, I sought verbal permission from the leader(s) of the churches to conduct the research.²⁰³ Discussions with the leaders of the communities and visiting the churches prior to starting the research helped build mutual trust. Similarly, before starting the CBS, or conducting interviews, I also verbally asked for permission from all of the participants of the group and assured them of the confidentiality of the research data. In addition to this, I assured that throughout the Bible studies, participants were free to withdraw at any time without adverse consequences, not participate, or participate just by listening. I did not introduce any written consent forms during the first few sessions. Throughout the research, I briefly explained to the CBS group what confidentiality meant; that is, I would not use their names and would disguise the name of the church in order to protect the community location and identity. Thus, I wanted to reassure the participants of their anonymity to protect them and their community. Finally, during the first Bible study session, I asked

me as a teacher or pastor. In other words, my role would have been seen as an expert rather than somebody who wants to learn and find out about the views of the community. However, this potential misunderstanding was partially solved by describing the study from the very beginning as focusing on the views of the participants, and reiterating that the my role was to ask questions, not to provide answers.

202 For example, loud and spontaneous expressions of glossolalia, almost casual discussion on miraculous intervention of God, and so on.

203 It perhaps needs to be noted that Pentecostal churches are generally pastor led. Most, if not all, important decisions are made by the leading pastor(s). Depending on the type and size, the community is involved in the decision-making processes in various degrees. For organizational structure and leadership in Brazilian Pentecostalism, see Lehman, *Struggle for the Spirit*, 117–129.

for permission to record and transcribe the Bible studies and, when applicable, the interviews.

Another important aspect of confidentiality is the storing and dissemination of data. Hand-written notes were stored in a secure location where only I had access to the data. Digital recordings were stored in a private, password-protected computer. The only ones who had access to the select digital materials were me and my assistants who helped transcribe parts of the CBS and interviews.²⁰⁴

While conducting the pilot project, it seemed to me that it would not be beneficial for the participants to sign a written consent form during the first few sessions. First, people in Bolivia are not used to dealing with written documents, particularly in a church setting. Instead of building trust, it would have rather raised suspicion. Written contracts in Bolivia are generally associated with business deals or official governmental transactions. Due to widespread corruption within the government and in the private sector,²⁰⁵ the idea of filling out a form was not likely to be seen positively, especially in the beginning. Overall, I tried to keep the written materials at a minimum. This was also the reason why I asked the participants to fill out the written consent forms only after a few initial studies had been conducted.²⁰⁶ The simple demographic questionnaire form was introduced to the group toward the latter half of the group Bible studies. The aim of this form was to gather simple data about the participants' socio-economic status, cultural background, and demographics.

A formal interview of the pastors of both churches supplemented the CBS,²⁰⁷ along with informal discussions with group participants, and participant observation in the church services and other church activities. This was done on a weekly basis for the duration of five months. The supplementary data collection methods were secondary to the CBS sessions and their purpose

204 The assistants were given copies of the digital materials, after which they were destroyed. The assistants received detailed instructions regarding privacy and confidentiality of the materials. The assistants also were not told the location or the name of the communities, nor did they have access to the written materials or other data. I personally went through all of the materials after the transcription process to ensure accuracy.

205 On corruption in Bolivia, see Iriarte, *Análisis crítico*, 500–507.

206 This sometimes meant tracing some individuals afterwards to receive an informed consent. On the other hand, some individuals who only participated in the first one or two studies sometimes were unreachable and thus did not sign a consent form. Nevertheless, these individuals gave permission orally to use the materials in the research. Often those who came only once or twice generally remained quiet throughout the Bible studies.

207 In the privileged group, the pastor's wife participated in the interview as it was conducted in the couple's home. The format of the interviews was semi-structured.

was to help corroborate and supplement the data. As needed, permissions were sought from the leader(s) of the community and other individuals when relevant.

The more difficult ethical questions were related to the social justice aspect of the case study. As mentioned above, how should a researcher respond to extreme poverty or human needs while conducting research? Should monetary compensation be offered to the participants? While I resolved not to give monetary compensations to the participants, I decided to offer a meal for all of the participants in the marginalized community at the end of the contextual Bible study sessions.²⁰⁸ Additionally, a small donation was given to the marginalized community (not individuals) at the end of the study to help alleviate the situation of any who had dire needs.²⁰⁹

Judging from the comments of some of the CBS participants, several experienced the group discussions as beneficial in their spiritual, social, and emotional growth.²¹⁰ Since the theme of the Bible studies was poverty, wealth, and salvation, it seemed to have encouraged, given hope, and contributed to the people's sense of dignity, especially in the socio-marginalized group. The study also acted, albeit indirectly, as an awareness raising process for the participants. Finally, I do not think that the ethical implications were limited to the immediate effects of the research. Rather, one of the broader aims of this was to raise awareness of the social inequality among churches in Latin America and elsewhere as well as to contribute to the larger socio-religious and

208 For similar suggestions, see Ryen, "Ethical Issues," 218–233; Anne Ryen, "Cross-Cultural Interviewing," in *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods* (eds. by E. Perelman and S. Curran; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 429–442.

209 The rationale for giving the donation after the fact was to avoid undue influence on the research or to create an unnecessary economic power wedge. This donation was not mentioned until the study had been conducted within the community.

210 Of course, one could not be sure of this before conducting this research. Nevertheless, prior research on empirical hermeneutics has not revealed potential harm that would have been caused by contextual Bible study sessions. On the contrary, those organic scholars who have practiced CBS insist on the positive effects for the communities (West, "Doing Contextual," 1–7; West, "Contextual Bible Study," 595–610; West, *The Academy of the Poor; Riches, What is Contextual*). Still, one needs to be aware of the potential harm, particularly psychological and emotional distress, which may occur during or after a Bible study session. I considered the risk factor in this regard to be minimal but mentioned potential negative effects to participants. Generally, the pastor or other leader(s) were available for counseling should it have been needed.

ethical discussion regarding social marginality and poverty in Latin America and beyond.²¹¹

Closely related to the issue of social justice is the power distance. It was clear that an educational and economic gap existed between the participants of the marginalized community and me. Many of the participants had little or no education and some struggled in reading the texts out loud. As I entered the local church buildings and occasionally had a chance to visit the homes of some of the participants, the meager living conditions alerted me to the differences of economic status between the community and myself. These experiences highlighted the power distance between us. While I was under no illusion to somehow “bridge the gap,” I tried to encourage sharing and free contribution by adopting a non-judgmental stance and empathetic attitude. I also mentioned at the beginning of the study that I was genuinely interested in how the participants understood the passages in light of their experience, and that I was only going to ask questions and give short comments on the background issues. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that since I as the researcher chose the biblical texts and created the CBS questions for each passage,²¹² my influence was at least moderate, if not considerable.²¹³ It also became evident

211 While the Methodist (and some other historic Protestant) and Catholic churches have worked to raise awareness of social inequality for a number of years in Bolivia, the Pentecostal and conservative evangelical churches have been less involved in social action and politics (Zacari Mamani, “Misión y proyección de la iglesia evangélica metodista de Bolivia,” in *La tradición protestante en la teología latinoamericana* [ed. J. Duque; Primer intento: lectura de la tradición metodista; San José, Costa Rica: Departamento ecuménico de investigaciones, 1983], 129–142; Anibal Guzman, “Apuntes para una historia de la irrupción de los pobres en la iglesia en América Latina—la experiencia boliviana,” in *Primer intento: lectura de la tradición metodista* (ed. J. Duque; San José, Costa Rica: Departamento ecuménico de investigaciones, 1983], 143–173). Bonino traces the historical roots of the conservative-liberal breach in Latin America to the ecclesial disputes in the 1970 to 1980s over issues such as theological liberalism, socialism, and the ecumenical movement (Bonino, “Las iglesias protestantes,” 30–38). One of the reasons for Pentecostals’ lack of socio-political engagement is the fact that the majority of them have lived on the margins of the society. Their religiosity was often frowned upon and they were effectively excluded from any serious political discourse. This has changed somewhat in the recent years, especially with the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism. Marginalization of Pentecostals lies at the heart of their suspicion toward ecumenical engagement still today.

212 Though I chose the texts, they were not chosen arbitrarily. In fact, after spending time in the marginalized communities, I had to include previously omitted texts that in my opinion were more pertinent to the community’s situation.

213 Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that anyone conducting an interview or focus group based research has to face the same dilemma. Therefore, an important aspect is the way questions are formulated so as not to suggest certain preconceived answers.

during the pilot study that the group Bible study needed a clear structure and direction instead of free-flowing discussions.²¹⁴ It seems to me that the creation of the small buzz-groups in the beginning of the CBS phase helped the participants to open up more, presumably because nobody had to contribute as individuals but as members of the groups.

One of the difficult ethical dilemmas of the study was the problem of representation. How could I, being a Finnish, middle-class, academically trained male, represent the views of the Bolivian marginalized (and the privileged) Pentecostal groups in a manner that would be fair, accurate, and ethical? I sided with those who argue that cross-cultural representation is possible and that social and textual representation cannot be collapsed into mere subjectivity.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, representation does involve a dialogical hermeneutical process between self, reality, and its interpretation; thus, it is never innocent or free from bias.²¹⁶ In the interpretation of data, the investigator is constantly moving between the data and his or her subjectivity. In this respect, I tried to foster reflexivity. My critical academic formation as a biblical scholar and my Pentecostal church affiliation were factors that undoubtedly influenced the entire hermeneutical process. Some of my interpretative conclusions have probably also been influenced by the purpose of the study to highlight socioeconomic marginality. Ultimately, the readings and representations are mine rather than the communities, even though I tried to faithfully and accurately represent the views of the individuals and the communities with whom I interacted.

On a practical level, the idea of faithful representation involves the potential misunderstanding of the subject matter due to language barrier and difficulties in cultural decoding. As Curran states, "decent language and cultural skills necessarily diminish opportunities for misunderstandings, a root cause of many ethical dilemmas."²¹⁷ Apart from reading the available literature on

214 Perhaps a less intrusive alternative would have been a study led by the pastor or a lay leader. Nevertheless, without prior experience in a dialogical group Bible study and/or as a capable facilitator, it is likely that the Bible study would have ended up being a preaching session by the pastor or a lay leader. According to my observations in Santa Cruz, few Bible study sessions involved significant dialogue between the leader and the participants. Where this did occur, it was usually limited to a few comments here and there during a lecture or sermon-type lesson.

215 See, for example, Ryen, "Cross-Cultural Interviewing," 429–442; see also Estermann (*Filosofia Andina*, 17–50).

216 Sarah Delamont, "Ethnography and Participant Observation," 205–215; Amanda Coffrey, "Ethnography and Self: Reflections and Representations," in *Qualitative Research in Action* (ed. T. May. London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 314–332.

217 Curran, "Research Ethics," 211.

the subject, my prior ten-month stay in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2003 proved to be invaluable. During that period, I worked with several marginalized communities in pastoral and educational capacities and gained reasonable cultural and linguistic competence. Nevertheless, an additional study of the culture and a reorientation to local Spanish dialect in eastern Bolivia were important due to the lapse of time between the previous stay and the current project. In addition to the previous preparations, I received help from colleagues in UEB as well as from many local friends who provided invaluable clarification of Bolivian social and cultural reality, decoding local customs, and nuances in local Spanish before, during, and after the field research.

According to some scholars, the poor have often been idealized as biblical interpreters, especially in Latin America.²¹⁸ This seems to be the case in the works of some liberation theologians.²¹⁹ This was an important issue, since the research of this study directly involved poor and marginalized communities. It is important to be aware of this issue that has influenced some earlier scholars. Perhaps one important issue in this regard is liberation theologians' insistence on the "preferential option for the poor," which narrowly understood may contribute to their idealization as biblical interpreters. A more pertinent but somewhat related issue is whether I was able to represent the participants' views faithfully without unduly idealizing or demeaning them. It needs to be acknowledged that, apart from coming from a different culture, I also come from a different social location. The idea of faithful representation then needed careful attention throughout the field research as well as in the interpretation of the data.

218 de Wit, "It Should be Burned," 39–60; Miguez, "Lectura latinoamericana," 77–99. From my prior experience in Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world, I was fully aware, even before the starting this, that the poor and marginalized readers rarely exhibit model interpretations from the perspective of academic scholars. Nevertheless, I have often been struck by the surprising comments and creative angles that the people with little material resources and without formal education provide. This is one of the reasons why I embarked on this project in the first place.

219 See, for example, Richard, "Lectura popular," 31–48, who states, "When . . . poor . . . read the Bible . . . the text acquires a new meaning . . . This meaning changes the text profoundly. In the first place it purifies the text from all ideological and idolatrous distortions of the dominant system and . . . makes the text communicate in clear and direct way the Word of God" ("Lectura popular," 46). This statement seems to be problematic at least in the sense that it seems to assume that all poor people (even in an extended sense of oppressed and marginalized) are able to somehow "purify the text" from ideological distortions and make it a clear and direct Word of God in some way to all.

2.2.1.5 Data Analysis and the Interpretation of the Results

Making sense of empirical data is not as simple as it might first seem. As William Gibson and Andrew Brown state, “there are few tangible practices that can be discussed as features of work that ‘constitute’ analysis.”²²⁰ Theoretical approaches abound and each theoretical and methodological decision has a bearing on the data analysis and the resulting interpretations.²²¹

Generally within qualitative studies there is interplay between the collection and analysis of data that forms a gradual process of understanding. Theoretically, at one extreme are approaches like the grounded theory (especially in its classical form), according to which ideas should emerge directly out of the data. On the other extreme are approaches that focus on the idea that theory needs to guide the entire research process.²²² Some proponents of the classical grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) insist that the researcher should enter the field with just a general notion of the research topic and with “no preconceived problem statement, interview protocols or extensive review of literature.”²²³ Accordingly, collection of empirical data and its analysis overlap and are mutually illuminating processes. In a pure form, this seems somewhat idealistic since the researcher always brings her/his prior understanding, theoretical knowledge of the subject, and values to the process. This inevitably guides the investigation to some extent and enables the researcher to separate the relevant from the less relevant issues. Nevertheless, the grounded theory approach undoubtedly highlights the importance of collecting and analyzing the empirical data rather than being directly guided by theory.

One of the basic elements of qualitative data analysis is coding. The purpose of coding is to move the researcher off the empirical data by fracturing it and then conceptualizing the underlying empirical patterns into more theoretically oriented explanations.²²⁴ In other words, the researcher assigns conceptual and descriptive codes on the data that help organize and group the material according to desired patterns. This coding process may be

220 William J. Gibson and Andrew Brown, *Working with Qualitative Data* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2009), 1.

221 Gibson and Brown indicate that there are more than fifty ways of analyzing data (*Ibid.*, 1).

222 Nicholas Walliman, *Social Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2006), 129–131.

223 Judith A. Holton, “The Coding Process and Its Challenges,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (eds. A. Bryant and K. Charmaz; London: SAGE Publishing, 2007), 268–271.

224 Holton, “The Coding Process and Its Challenges,” 266.

concept-driven or data-driven based on whether the researcher prefers to start from theory or from empirical data.²²⁵

The data analysis tool for this study was what Barbour calls a “pragmatic version of grounded theory.”²²⁶ This means that the researcher conducts a preliminary investigation on the topic but remains open to the new and emerging data to the point that it may have an influence on the collection of data, creation of codes, and emerging hypotheses. In this study, there were few occasions where the emerging data and its preliminary analysis affected the research processes. For example, some of the texts that I had initially selected for the contextual Bible studies were replaced as new data emerged during participatory observations and the initial CBS sessions of the pilot study. I decided to omit some of the texts (Luke 18:18–30) that dealt with similar topics as the ones we had already read in the group (6:17–26; 16:19–31) and included other texts. One of the new texts was used to open up a discussion about people’s basic needs both in the text and in the present-day experience (Luke 12:22–34). This change was based on the preliminary analysis of the emerging data both in contextual Bible study sessions and participatory observations.

The data analysis of the project had a two-pronged focus. The primary aspect of the analysis was to find out the groups’ understanding of the aforementioned texts in Luke, particularly as this understanding was related to the themes of poverty, wealth, and salvation. To achieve this, the transcribed reading reports were analyzed and coded using the following codes. First, there was one general code category of material possessions, which was further divided into smaller segments (e.g., wealth, poverty, and material conditions of the readers).²²⁷ Close attention was paid to the groups’ representations of material possessions, wealth, poverty, and marginalization in their understanding of the biblical texts and in the readers’ present-day experience. The second main code was salvation/benefit. This highlighted salvation or more specifically this-worldly benefit that the groups perceived to have or receive either directly or indirectly from God or transcendent reality. When relevant, any negative aspects of salvation were also noted. The third main code was the exegetico-hermeneutical processing of the readers. For this, I applied the relevant insights from Conradie and Jonker (2001) and de Wit (2004). The most pertinent aspects in the analysis were the following:

225 Graham R. Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2007), 44–46.

226 Rosaline Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2007), 120.

227 In one of the studies (Luke 19:1–10), the idea of corruption emerged as one of the central topics in the biblical text and in the experience of the readers; thus it was used as a separate code for that particular session.

1) Attention to the text itself (i.e., the literary level); 2) Attention to the world behind the text (historical background); 3) Attention to the tradition of interpretation; 4) Interpretational strategies (linking text to the contemporary experience, bridging the gap between text and experience; influence of the Bible on them); 5) Strategies of imagination; 6) Character identification; 7) Appropriation strategies; 8) Praxeological effect (i.e., creation of new action); 9) Codes or heuristic keys (i.e., what unlocked the meaning of the text); 10) Reading attitude (dogmatic, pietistic, emancipatory, etc.); 11) Attention to the contemporary context of interpretation; (awareness of one's own context and its influence on reading); 12) Attention to the world behind the interpretation process (ideologies and/or power relations that may influence, guide, or distort their reading); and 13) Attention to group dynamics.²²⁸

In addition, the attention to the exegetico-hermeneutical processes also helped draw inferences regarding whether socio-economic status might influence the interpretation of a given text. For example, what sections of the text were the focus of analysis and appropriation; what characters or themes group members identified with (e.g., Rich Man or Lazarus) or were projected on others; what present-day issues were brought into dialogue with the text; what functioned as a heuristic key to unlock the meaning of the text; and to what extent were the participants aware of underlying theological or ideological influences on the reading of the text or on their present-day experience, especially regarding material possessions.

As well, there were other factors that helped make inferences about the influence of the groups' social status into the interpretation. Some of these were the extent to which poverty, wealth, and salvation were spiritualized, read symbolically, or seen in concrete material terms in the text and readers' experience; how poverty and wealth were depicted in the texts and in the real world by the groups; how the language about the poor/wealthy and poverty/ riches was used by the groups; and what reasons were given to justify discrepancies of wealth and poverty in the text and present-day experience of the readers.

The crucial component in the process was the comparison of the groups' opinions about the aforementioned issues. The similarities in the groups' church tradition and ethnic and cultural composition helped rule out these factors to some extent. Though these factors did not guarantee error-free

²²⁸ Adapted from de Wit, "Codes and Coding," 408–411; Conradie and Jonker, "Bible Study," 381–398.

interpretation, they did rule out negative factors and provided a plausible methodological framework for making positive inferences from the data.

Finally, I also kept a close eye for readings that might be peculiar or insightful regarding the interpretation of the Bible in the reconstructed first century context.²²⁹ The selection and creation of codes were driven by this framework and guided by the emerging data as well as prior theoretical considerations. Data from the marginalized group and the privileged group were analyzed separately and then compared with each other. The data analysis process purported to be descriptive and interpretative, but I did not aim to draw an overarching theory, as is often the case when grounded theory is employed.²³⁰

As mentioned earlier, this study was not exclusively empirical and hermeneutical but includes an exegetical and historical emphasis as well. Therefore, the next section will briefly detail the methodology that was used in the historical reading of the texts in Luke's gospel and the way the two interpretative horizons, that is, the present-day empirical and the historical reading, were brought into dialogue with each other.

2.2.2 *Reading Luke's Gospel Historically and in Dialogue with the Bolivian Readers*

The main focus of the historical reading in this study was Luke's audience and how the first century reader-hearer perceived the dynamics of material possessions and salvation in the specific texts (Luke 6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:1, 12–14; 16:19–31; 19:1–10). In addition to this, scholarly views on the pre-history of the text and socio-historical context of Luke's gospel will be explored. The latter will be particularly helpful in exploring the views of Luke's audience.

A number of biblical scholars have used audience-oriented criticism successfully.²³¹ This study followed those who have drawn insights from Peter Rabinowitz's theory of differing levels of audience interactions.²³² According

229 Cf. Smith-Christopher, "Introduction," 11–22.

230 Cf. Kathy Charmaz and Karen Henwood, "Grounded Theory," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (eds. C. Willis and W. Stainton-Rogers; London: SAGE Publishing, 2008), 240–259; Holton, "The Coding Process," 265–287.

231 Andrew A. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angles. Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (New Testament Monographs, no: 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 8–11; John P. Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 2–13; Warren Carter, "Matthew 4.18–22 and Matthean Discipleship: An Audience-Oriented Perspective," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 58–75.

232 Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 121–141, esp. 125–136, distinguishes four different types of audiences: 1) actual or flesh-and-blood audience, 2) authorial or the hypothetical audience to whom to

to Rabinowizt, the authorial audience is the hypothetical audience for which the literary work is concretely directed. The author of a piece of writing necessarily had to make assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and customs in the same way as a news reporter does when writing an article for a newspaper. Historically or culturally distant writings make certain assumptions about their audiences that might have been obvious in the original context but are elusive to later readers. Especially when the historical or cultural distance is great, it can be difficult for today's reader to understand the meaning.²³³ Therefore, it is important to ground the interpretation of the text historically. In light of uncertainties about Luke's provenance and other more specific details, however, it is impossible to know the assumptions of Luke's real audience with any degree of certainty. Yet, it is possible to inquire how the authorial audience might have heard Luke's discourse on wealth and poverty in the gospel.

The connection between the authorial audience and the real audience, albeit somewhat elusive, also has a link. At the very least, the conceptual framework and many socio-cultural patterns would have resonated between the two; otherwise, the real audience would have been unable to make sense of the discourse in Luke's gospel.²³⁴ Therefore, when I make comments concerning "Luke's audience," this ambiguity between the different levels of audiences is acknowledged.

The varying scholarly views on the text's pre-history are explored and utilized to the extent that it is beneficial to the interpretation of the final form of the text. In this sense, tradition history and redaction critical insights will prove useful. Nevertheless, as will become clear in the exegetical section, the pre-history of the text at times is difficult to establish and scholarly views vary a great deal.

The more pertinent "behind the text" features for this study are the socio-historical circumstances of the Jewish and Greco-Roman peoples of the first century CE. A number of biblical, Jewish, and Greco-Roman sources will be explored, particularly to shed light into the concrete circumstances of poverty and marginalization of the time. This is important for the purpose of better understanding the socio-cultural and religious milieu and how Luke's

literary work is designed, 3) narrative or intra-textual audience that is presented in the text, and 4) ideal narrative audience.

233 Rabinowizt, "Truth in Fiction," 126–127.

234 Halvor Moxnes, "The Social Context of Luke's Community," *Int.* 8 (1994): 379–389. However unlikely, it is obviously possible that the real audience would not have understood much or any of the things that were written in the gospel.

discourse might have been heard. These features will also help reconstruct possible ways that the authorial audience might have perceived, responded, and reacted to Luke's discourse on wealth and poverty.

2.2.2.1 Connecting the Reading Horizons

It has become clear thus far that this study includes both empirical and historical components. In the empirical component, two distinct Bolivian communities read passages about wealth and poverty in Luke's gospel, which were then analyzed. The same texts about wealth and poverty were analyzed using an historical, audience-oriented reading process. The next question is how these two methodologically and pragmatically distinct operations are brought into contact with one another. One might ask whether it is meaningful or even possible. These are the problems that are investigated next.

According to the traditional historical-critical exegesis, there is a clear distinction, both theoretical and pragmatic, between the historical exegesis proper and the application of the results to theology and ethics. It has also aimed to be objective and impartial.²³⁵ According to the more recent developments in the hermeneutical theory and linguistics, however, this dichotomy between objective and descriptive historical research and the subsequent application is no longer viable.²³⁶ Rather, it is acknowledged that explanation of texts (exegesis) and the resulting understanding or application (hermeneutics)

235 Stendahl, "Biblical Theology," 418–432. See also Räisänen, who states "Historical critics have sometimes pleaded for detached objectivity, but in practice they rarely abstained from value judgments" (H. Räisänen, "Biblical Critics in the Global Village," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* [eds. H. Räisänen et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000], 20, 9–28).

236 See, for example, Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 265–493; Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 71–95; 95–110; Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 1–34. Räisänen, while holding onto the strict distinction between "what it meant" and "what it means today," uses the language of "relative objectivity" yet admits that historical inquiry involves "imaginative reconstruction." At the same time, he criticizes Schüssler Fiorenza's liberationist reading of Revelation and accuses her of "liberationist dogmatics" ("Biblical Critics," 9–28, esp. 11–15). The major weakness in Räisänen's argument is that he avoids discussing hermeneutical theory altogether and downplays the interpreter's role as one who reconstructs the meaning. Even historical reconstruction of meaning involves use of creative imagination and interpretative choices at every level of the hermeneutical process (D. Patte, "Contextual Reading of Mark and North Atlantic Scholarship," in *Mark: Texts@Contexts* [eds. N. Duran et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], 199–212; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Defending the Center, Trivializing the Margins," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* [eds. H. Räisänen et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000], 29–48).

are closely connected and interwoven.²³⁷ Some liberation and feminist theologians acknowledged this already in the 1960s and 1970s. Some key features that support this are as follows. First, the reader cannot completely leave behind his/her viewpoint and conception of reality. In other words, the text must be related into one's existing perception of "how things are" or worldview.²³⁸ Second, texts engender "gaps of indeterminacy" (cf. Wolfgang Iser). In other words, the reader must fill in places where the text is broken up or has gaps. As such, language by nature contains ambiguities, since no author can supply all details in a literary work. Rather, room is left, sometimes deliberately, for the imagination to engage the reader. Some of the most important "gaps of indeterminacy" involve ambiguities of grammar, syntax, narrative flow, and connections between textual segments.²³⁹ Finally, though texts contain a degree of polyvalency, this does not presuppose that textual meaning is arbitrary. It is also possible to misread a text. In other words, there are constraints to what the text may mean.²⁴⁰ Thiselton has pointed out some texts are more open (polyvalent) while others are more closed (stable).²⁴¹ Thus, any interpretation is a dialogue between the reader and the text. In this sense, the horizons of "what it means" and "what it meant" can no longer be neatly separated, and hermeneutical theory is necessary.

As a result of developments in hermeneutics, recent decades have seen a new interest in the critical analysis of present-day reading, relevance, and use of the Bible. Some of these include the aforementioned liberation hermeneutics in different variations, dialogical reading, CBS method, and empirical hermeneutics. In addition to these, feminist, cultural, postcolonial, and autobiographical criticism have also gained prominence.

The above-mentioned newer approaches generally separate and fuse the historical horizon and the present-day situation with varying degrees while acknowledging the impossibility of jumping off the hermeneutical circle. For example, Eleazar Fernandez characterizes his reading of Exodus as one that "seeks to advance a narrative of liberation . . . in keeping with . . . the experience

237 Or what Stendahl ("Biblical Theology," 418–432) famously classified as "what the text meant" and "what the text means" as if the two could be neatly separated into two distinct categories or realms.

238 W. R. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 179–181.

239 Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 186–187. Tate largely follows Wolfgang Iser's theory with some adaptation.

240 See details of what the constraints might be in Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 202–205.

241 Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 331–335.

of . . . Filipino Americans.”²⁴² In his study, the focus is more on the present-day reading of the experience of the Filipino Americans and less on the explication of the various Exodus texts.²⁴³ Further, there are few attempts to make a clear distinction between the meaning of biblical texts in their historical context and the Filipino-American experience of “exodus-from-Egypt” to America. On the contrary, it is the Exodus “narrative framework” as such that gains prominence as it is related to the experience of Filipino-Americans’ quest for liberation.²⁴⁴

Other approaches focus almost exclusively on the historical horizon and the exegesis is done from a certain critical angle,²⁴⁵ while others try to conduct a critical dialogue between the historical and present-day horizons.²⁴⁶ For those who attempt to draw present-day implications of some sort, there is usually an attempt to find analogies, similarities and differences, resonances, or other connections between the historical reading and the present-day counterpart.

242 Eleazar S. Fernandez, “Exodus-toward-Egypt: Filippino-Americans’ Struggle to Realize the Promised Land in America,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Kindle loc. 4926.

243 The reading focuses on the Exodus narrative and there is no detailed exegesis as such. Thus, it would perhaps be correct to say that Fernandez exegetes the Filipino-American experience in light of Exodus narrative. An article by Erin Runions (Erin Runions, “Desiring War: Apocalypse, Commodity Fetish, and the End of History,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. Sugirtharajah; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Kindle loc. 1893–2193) in the same anthology on the Bush administration’s war rhetoric is even further removed from the biblical texts. Runions analyzes the present-day rhetoric and its connections to certain biblical and theological ideas and images.

244 Fernandez, “Exodus-toward-Egypt,” Kindle loc. 4909–5153. This is not a criticism as such or an attempt to say that Fernandez falls into anachronisms or ill-informed reading of the historical text. It is just an acknowledgment of one approach that pays much less emphasis on the historical aspects of the text than some others.

245 E.g. Jorge Pixley, “The Political Dimension of Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *God’s Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America* (eds. R. Kinsler and G. Kinsler; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 40–43 (liberation); Stephen D. Moore, “Mark and Empire: ‘Zealot’ and ‘Postcolonial’ Readings,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. Sugirtharajah; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) Kindle loc. 3238–3468 (postcolonial); Kari Latvus, “Decolonizing Yahweh: A Postcolonial Reading of 2 Kgs 24–25,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. Sugirtharajah. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) Kindle loc. 3125–3525 (postcolonial).

246 E.g. Osvaldo D. Vena, “The Markan Construction of Jesus as Disciple of the Kingdom,” in *Mark: Texts@Contexts* (eds. N. Duran et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 71–98; Elsa Tamez, “The Conflict in Mark: A Reading from the Armed Conflict of Colombia,” in *Mark: Texts@Contexts* (trans. L. Guardiola-Sáenz; eds. N. Duran et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 101–125.

In this study, the two reading horizons or contexts (present-day empirical and historical exegetical) are initially kept separate. That is, the present-day empirical component with its peculiar dynamics and the historical exegetical reading remain distinct until both segments have been interpreted independently. At the same time, I acknowledge that the reading of both horizons is done by me and somebody else could have reached interpretative results different from mine. Once this stage was done thoroughly, the two were brought into contact with each other in the form of a critical dialogue, which was conducted in the following ways: First, I looked for points of contact between the Bolivian present-day readers' interpretations and scholarly readings (including my own) of Luke's text about wealth, poverty, and salvation. "Contact points" might include identification of similar interpretations and themes or completely differing ones between the two contexts. Though the idea of finding points of contact is rather subjective, it is at least possible to observe interpretations that are similar or dissimilar between biblical scholars and the Bolivian groups. This part also included the kind of methods, methodological frameworks, and purposes that guided the Bolivian readers and the biblical scholars in their search for meaning.

Second, I investigated whether the differing readings shed light or highlighted certain features in one or the other reading. For example, it is widely acknowledged that so called ordinary readers read texts differently than trained or critical readers. Generally, the reading mode and results of the latter have been deemed superior, though the "reading with" approach has highlighted the potential insights of non-professional readers.²⁴⁷ Yet, it is possible, at least in principle, that the Bolivian readers' interpretations include features that can be used to illuminate or critique certain scholarly readings, methods, or ideological assumptions. Also, as mentioned earlier, some scholars have proposed that some non-Western cultures retain ideas, practices, and customs that are closer to the cultural context of the first century Mediterranean world and may lead into new insights on a historical level.²⁴⁸ This study tests the aforementioned hypothesis. In addition, certain scholarly readings may also illuminate or critique aspects of the Bolivian readers' interpretations and assumptions.

Finally, an important feature in this dialogue was to investigate how an ancient text was used in a different socio-cultural context that was distinctly different from its origins. Thus, biblical images, concepts, and stories that functioned in a certain way in the first century Mediterranean world were

247 Be that as it may, this study is reluctant to make generalizing value statements about different readings in this regard.

248 See Chiquete, "Healing, Salvation," 474–485; Smith-Christopher, "Introduction," 11–22.

harnessed to illuminate, encourage, critique, and support certain beliefs, practices, and ideologies in twenty-first century Bolivia.

Before moving into the actual presentation of the readings by the Bolivian groups and the historical readings of the gospel texts, two preliminary tasks are needed. First, I will briefly describe the socio-historical and religious context of present-day Bolivia. Second, I will give a thick description of the Bolivian groups, drawing from the questionnaires that the groups completed as well as my observations of the two communities.

2.2.3 *Toward a Description of Contextual Realities in Bolivia*

In media and (Western) popular imagination, Bolivia is often synonymous with snow-capped Andean mountains, coca leaves, and indigenous culture and politics. Nevertheless, nearly two-thirds of Bolivia consists of hot and steamy low lands.²⁴⁹ Eastern Bolivia or *el Oriente*, as it is locally known, has its distinct culture(s) and customs that are considerably different from the Andes mountain range and the central valleys. Many eastern Bolivians use the word *camba* as a self-designation despite the highly ambiguous character of the term.²⁵⁰ *Cambas* characterize themselves as carefree, hospitable, and happy people in contrast to their “rigid and hard-working” compatriots, the *collas*.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, despite the fact that the city of Santa Cruz in the east has become the most important economic hub of the country, numerous people in *Oriente* live in abject poverty. In addition, corruption, civil unrest, and the lack of basic services make life difficult for many even in the cities. Despite these difficulties, many people in the communities maintain the carefree and happy *camba* outlook on life.

As mentioned, eastern Bolivia does not fit into the general media representation of the mountainous and “indigenous” Bolivia. Though Bolivian *Oriente*, and particularly Santa Cruz, is sometimes portrayed as synonymous with the white, neo-liberal oligarchy that opposes the indigenous peoples of the Andean region, the situation is more complicated than this simple dichotomy allows.²⁵²

249 Paula P. Hasbún, “Regional Identities. Focus on Santa Cruz—Bolivia Revolutions and Beyond,” *ReVista. Harvard Review of Latin America*. (Fall 2011): 30. Cited 1 August 2011. Online: http://www.academia.edu/964813/The_Bolivia_issue_of_ReVista_the_Harvard_Review_of_Latin_America.

250 Adrián Waldman, *El hábitus Camba. Un estudio etnográfico sobre Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Editorial El País, 2008), 37–52; Claudia Peña and Nelson J. Bazán, *Ser cruceño en octubre: Aproximación al proceso de construcción de la identidad cruceña a partir de la crisis de octubre de 2003* (La Paz: PIEB, 2006), 25–42.

251 Waldman, *El hábitus Camba*, 37–52, 83–94, 140–142, 199–214.

252 See Hasbún, “Regional Identities,” 30–32.

As I talked with the local people in Santa Cruz and the surrounding villages, both rich and poor and Protestants and Catholics, it became increasingly clear that the dislike of the current president Evo Morales (2006–) and his politics concerned, above all, the deeply-rooted, socio-cultural values.

The antagonism between the mountainous west and the eastern lowlands has a long history. The advance of the Inca Empire was halted by the various indigenous tribes of the Bolivian lowlands.²⁵³ During the Chaco war (1932–1935), many eastern Bolivians felt that they were fighting against their own “brethren” because they were culturally and ethnically closer to the Paraguayans than their highland compatriots.²⁵⁴

More recently, the politics of Evo Morales toward *cambas*, and especially the violent suppression of the indigenous people in Tipnis, have polarized the situation even more. Ironically, many indigenous groups of eastern Bolivia do not consider Evo Morales as indigenous but rather as *campesino*.²⁵⁵ Many also do not support Morales’ so called “indigenous politics.” This cultural rivalry is accentuated by the economic migration of the *collas*, or Andean Bolivians, to the city of Santa Cruz and the surrounding countryside. The migration seems to consist mostly of poor people in search of economic opportunities, but a number of rich, upper-class *collas* also invest in the lucrative agro-industry and businesses or buy luxurious vacation homes. Many *cambas* see this as a form of internal colonization and a threat to their cultural identity.²⁵⁶ Ironically, some

253 Herbert S. Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20–23.

254 Waldman, *El hábitus Camba*, 25.

255 *Campesino* means a peasant or rural person and often carries with it connotations of poverty, oppression, and ignorance in popular thought. This came across in many discussions within ISEAT (*Instituto superior ecuménico andino de teología*) *nucleo oriente* (the eastern unit—the lowland unit that has little to do with the Andean mountains or culture; the name and its associations was lamented by some in ISEAT *nucleo oriente* for its association with the Andes) and with other ordinary people in and outside churches. Wightman (*New Bolivians*, 94–95) indicates that Evo Morales, before his election campaign, was largely seen as the leader of the coordinating committee of the Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba (the umbrella organization for coca leaf growing syndicates). By the time he was elected, he had largely invented himself as an “indigenous” politician rather than a coca growers’ advocate. Thus his identity as an indigenous Aymara became the determining factor in the campaign when he aligned himself as one who opposed the long-standing oppression of the Bolivian masses.

256 Cf. Waldman, *New Bolivians*, 147–159 about losing *camba* identity; the more extreme example of this is the movement *nacion camba*. This group argues that Bolivia has been forcefully reinvented, as Aymara-Quechua state, at the expense and neglect of the cultural distinction of the eastern Bolivian *camba* region. Their rhetoric is strong and includes, for

locals pointed out to me how the president's politics of decolonization of the Western powers (especially the U.S.) from Bolivia had turned into internal colonization of *el Oriente* by the same president.

Eastern Bolivians often identify themselves as *cambas*. The term is highly ambiguous due to its historical and cultural connotations. In the late nineteenth century, the term *camba* was synonymous with the indigenous population of the eastern lowlands and was used as a polar opposite of those who had a "pure" lineage of the Spanish colonizers.²⁵⁷ Later on, it adopted more positive connotations and finally came to mean broadly people who live in the region of *el Oriente*. Nevertheless, as many of my Bolivian friends suggested, today "it is all about who says it and how you say it." To call somebody a *camba* can thus be either derogatory or positive.

The *camba* identity has been, and is, in constant formation. Recent studies debate the exact characteristics of the *camba* identity. The stereotypical happy and worry-free attitude was pronounced as I visited some of the villages outside the city of Santa Cruz. In one village, the pastor said that though the villagers are extremely poor, they are not worried about their next meal. If there is food for today, tomorrow is not something to be worried about. Similarly, according to an anthropological study of the upper middle class *cruceños*,²⁵⁸ it is precisely this laid-back attitude to life that distinguishes *cambas* from *collas*. Some *cambas* are even willing to label themselves as "lazy," though others do not agree with this characterization. In popular imagination, the symbol of a man playing a guitar in a hammock has become so popular that miniature statues are sold in the market.²⁵⁹

It seems to me that, in addition to the threat to one's cultural identity, one of the important aspects of the rivalry is access to economic resources and opportunities. According to some recent studies, there are approximately 530,000 people in the city of Santa Cruz who live in poverty.²⁶⁰ As a result of these (and many other) factors, there is a constant threat of political instability, roadblocks, and according to some²⁶¹ even threat of civil war. During my

example, talks about "internal colonization" and "state terrorism." <http://nacioncamba.org/2013/08/la-poblacion-camba-crucena-y-otros-apuntes/>.

257 Peña and Bazán, *Ser cruceño en octubre*, 36.

258 People who live in the city of Santa Cruz.

259 Waldmann, *El hábitus camba*, 140–141.

260 http://www.laestrelladeloriente.com/noticia_completa.php?idcat=13&idnoticia=29625&fecha=2012-6-13.

261 The possibility of civil war was mentioned to me by both *cambas* and *collas*.

stay, medical doctors went on strike for nearly fifty days. As a result, I heard reports of people dying due to lack of medical services.

In addition, *el Oriente* has a number of environmental factors that make living conditions difficult. Recent years have seen epidemic proportions of dengue fever in the summer due to intense heat, flooding, and poor hygiene. In the winter, the chilly southerly winds make life difficult for those without proper shelter, and in the spring, the annual burning of the nearby fields make the air in parts of Santa Cruz toxic.

Economically, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere and is divided into the small, rich elite and the large segment of poor peasants with a few in the middle class.²⁶² Religiously, Bolivia is mainly Catholic though there has been a recent resurgence of indigenous beliefs as well as the proliferation of conservative, Pentecostal, and charismatic Christian groups.²⁶³ Though Pentecostal and charismatic churches are found in every part of the country, they are more prevalent in the Andean region than in the eastern lowlands.

This intent of this brief description of Bolivia was to convey an idea of the socio-cultural differences within Bolivia and how this influences the socio-political and religious landscape of the country. Nevertheless, there are also great socio-economic differences that are extant in the eastern part of Bolivia and Santa Cruz in particular. In the next section, I will describe the two socio-economically different communities that were studied in the empirical part of the research project.

2.2.4 *Thick Description of the Bolivian Pentecostal Communities in the Case Study*

The sample churches consisted of two Pentecostal churches, one of which was from a socially and economically marginalized community; the other was from an upper middle class community. The small church located in the socio-economically marginalized communities has about thirty members. It is part of an independent Pentecostal denomination called *Misión de Jesucristo*.²⁶⁴ The pastor told me that they (leaders of the denomination) broke off from the *Asamblea de Dios* in the late 1990s to establish their own work.

262 Klein, *A Concise History*, 239–265.

263 Religious and socio-political dominance of the Catholic Church has been recently challenged by indigenous religionists and various Protestant groups. See details in Ana Maria Vargas et al., *Iglesias evangélicas y mundo indígena. Religión y desarrollo*. no. 2 (2007): 4–33.

264 Due to the smallness of the denomination, the name has been changed.

The income level of the participants ranged from \$56 to \$396 per month for those who were employed. Some were unemployed while others worked as manual laborers, office assistants, and small business owners/vendors and the like. Most participants were from *departamento* de Santa Cruz.²⁶⁵ The age range of the participants was from fifteen to sixty years with most participants in their late twenties and some in their early- to mid-20s and 40s. Educationally, five participants had completed school at a secondary level and only one at a primary level. Three had some kind of technical training and three had taken a course or more at the university level.²⁶⁶ Though most of the members had access to potable water and electricity, the income level and the worries they reported during the study suggest that many were struggling to make ends meet.²⁶⁷

The church building in which the CBSS were conducted was located in an officially middle class sector of the city and adjacent to one of the famous upper-class suburbs of Santa Cruz; yet this was also close to the one of the poorest sections of the city. The more specific location of the church was in what I would call “a pocket of poverty”; that is, an area of several blocks where the dwellings are in quite poor condition and elicit other characteristics of poverty. The church stood next to a large, three-meter-deep drainage sewer that was literally ten steps from the church’s entrance. The sewer often is cluttered with garbage and fills with water during the rainy season. In addition, there were a number of karaoke bars next to each other across the street that competed for customers and, it seemed, the volume of the music. The environmental factors, especially the level of background noise and heat made the research sometimes a challenge.

The church services as such were characterized by joyous singing, clapping, spontaneous prayers, and *alabanzas* (worship songs).²⁶⁸ The pastor preached during regular Sunday morning and evening services while people sat on rustic plastic chairs. There was a small worn-out pulpit in the front of the sanctuary and the bare concrete walls were covered with linen sheets that were hung

265 Out of fourteen who filled out the questionnaire, seven were from Santa Cruz, one from Beni, one from Sucre, and three from Cochabamba. All of the participants had lived in Santa Cruz for many years.

266 Two individuals had left the section blank. It is difficult to know whether the reason for this was a complete lack of any education or some unknown reason.

267 The pastor also informed during an interview that most people in the church are poor even if not absolutely poor.

268 I did not hear any testimonies during the church service though the pastor exhorted people a few times to tell their testimonies on various issues during CBSS.

with thin ropes. During the rainy season the roof leaked in several sections and the lights went out with some frequency. The atmosphere was joyous, celebratory, and uplifting, and the small building was full of adults and children during and after the church services. The church also operated a small “soup kitchen” on its premises. The small main sanctuary doubled as a “restaurant-kitchen” and the pastor said that they give out about eighty meals per day, five days a week. Most of the food donations came from wealthier believers or supporters, while the pastor, his wife, and two assistants prepared and served those in need. They distributed the meals at a nominal price or free of charge to the poor and needy in the community. The pastor and the church were happy to be part of the research project and seemed to enjoy the group discussions.

The upper middle class church rented a space within a five-star hotel in one of the wealthy areas of the city.²⁶⁹ It was an independent Pentecostal church of about 100–150 regular attendees during Sunday morning services.²⁷⁰ The pastor told me that he had left one of the biggest mega-churches in Santa Cruz in order to start a new ministry in the early 2000s.²⁷¹

The income level of the participants ranged from \$460 to \$28,000 per month. Most participants were consciously affluent professionals and the group included a corporate lawyer, university professor, and a TV reporter. Only two of the participants were originally from Santa Cruz, while others were from the Andean regions of La Paz and Cochabamba, and one originally from Colombia; however, all of the participants had lived in Santa Cruz for a number of years. Six out of eleven who filled out the questionnaire had academic formation and one had technical education. Most participants were in their 30s and 40s with two individuals in their 60s.

Overall, the participants seemed self-consciously sophisticated and confident. The CBSS were conducted in a comfortable and roomy private house with air-conditioning, snacks, and little or no distraction from background noises, heat, or other factors. The five-star hotel where the Sunday services were conducted resided in one of the affluent neighborhoods of the city. The hotel auditorium had comfortable chairs and the latest technology and amenities to host the worship service. Though the pastor preached without visual aids, *pastora*

269 The city of Santa Cruz is clearly divided into so-called *barrios populares* and the middle/upper class areas. Still, in the latter, one can find “pockets of poverty.”

270 The pastor mentioned that about 400 people attend the church on Sunday mornings’ two services. This seemed like quite an exaggeration based on my calculations.

271 Pastor and *pastora* (pastor’s wife) later told me that God had called them to minister particularly to the wealthy and “snobbery” people.

and another congregant who gave short teachings used PowerPoint and multi-media to boost their presentations.

The church surprisingly lacked a worship band, and in most services the pastor played soft worship songs via his smart phone, praying and exhorting the congregants into deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The atmosphere in the church was therapeutic and peaceful and lacked the loudness and celebratory aspects that often characterize other Pentecostal churches in Bolivia. The people who attended the church seemed consciously affluent and the pastor mentioned a few times in his sermons that he knows that there are many prosperous people in the service. Perhaps a surprising aspect in the congregation was that the pastor preached very little on giving or the obligation of giving tithes and offerings, at least during my observations. His underlying discourse though seemed to assume that God blesses materially people who give to the church.²⁷² There were no aggressive pleas for money, however, and the offering was collected at the end of the service almost incidentally when people were about to leave.

Finally, the congregation and the group welcomed me warmly and it was not difficult to access or build trust with the community as such.²⁷³ Based on their comments, the participants felt that the CBSS and the discussions were beneficial to them. Some also expressed the notion that it was a new way of studying and learning since everyone was allowed to contribute.

Now that the methodological framework of the study has been established, it is possible to move forward and investigate both the Bolivian groups' readings and the scholarly readings of the Lucan texts in more detail. This is the topic of the next several chapters (chs. 3–7).

272 During an interview the pastor stated that he believes in "integrated prosperity," which means that God's blessing touches every area of one's life, including financial prosperity.

273 This was quite surprising since I had visited several affluent Pentecostal churches in search for a potential group. Sometimes I was simply ignored or turned down. Some of the administrators in UEB mentioned that particularly the affluent Pentecostal churches are sometimes exclusive and difficult to access.

PART 2

Reading Luke's Poverty Texts across Contexts



Comprised of five chapters, Part 2 focuses on the analysis of Luke's poverty texts. Chapter 3 discusses the Beatitudes and Woes (6:20–26) and Chapter 4 explores Jesus' discourse on anxiety and seeking God's kingdom (12:22–34). This is followed by an analysis of Jesus' banquet invitations in Chapter 5 (14:1, 12–14) and the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) in Chapter 6. The final text in Chapter 7 focuses on Zacchaeus, the toll collector (19:1–10).

Analysis of Ordinary and Scholarly Readings of Luke 6:20–26

This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first deals with the empirical description of the ordinary readers' interpretation and experience of Luke 6:20–26. The second section provides scholarly historical readings of the same text, and the third comprises a critical dialogue between the first two parts. Thus, in the third section, the focus will be on finding similarities and differences, as well as points of contact between the present-day readers' interpretation and an historical, scholarly reading of the passage, as was indicated in the previous chapter.

3.1 Empirical Reading of Luke 6:20–26¹ by the Bolivian Pentecostal Groups

The description of both the socio-economically marginalized group (MG) and the privileged (PG) groups' readings of the passage are presented using three main themes: 1) material possessions and social status, 2) salvation and benefit, and 3) the exegetico-hermeneutical approaches, including the praxeological effects of the reading.

3.1.1 *Socio-Economically Marginalized Group's Reading of Luke 6:20–26*

3.1.1.1 Possessions and Social Status

The group did not have a uniform view of who the poor in 6:20 are. Some viewed them as a mixture of economic and social categories while others saw them more in spiritual/ethical terms. The rich in 6:26 were understood primarily in material terms, though spiritual/ethical aspects were often attached to them as well. In both sections, the perspectives were often rather mixed:

Ruben: He [Jesus] said that the poor will be saved and it refers to us . . . because the poor will have the kingdom of God.

¹ During CBS, the exact passage was 6:17–26 though the emphasis was on 6:20–26. Thus, I focus mainly on that section.

Juana: For the poor, for those who cry, He knows the reward that He is going to give, only Him. I say that God placed Himself on the side of the poor since he [Jesus] was born in a very lowly² family.

Marcos: It also refers to . . . let's say to the rich and sinners . . . like condemning them, like one part happy and one part sad and they because they are already enjoying on earth, right?

Daniel: Because the two groups have two different attitudes and what you sow you are also going to reap . . . the poor sowed this and [they] were going to receive and the rich the same . . . they loved this world and they loved their riches and they had to receive reward.

Ruben and Juana clearly favor the economic category and also identify themselves and Jesus as such. Marcos and Daniel specifically equate the rich with the enjoyment of life, which is connected to their wealth. Some, like Ruben, also held the view that the poor have a more receptive disposition toward God:

Ruben: The poor have a simple heart to receive God . . . the rich have a hard heart that cannot receive God . . . we are not rich and we have a simple heart to receive the word of God.

Nevertheless, *Pastora*³ contested this view. She made her voice heard emphatically after another person's close identification between the poor and the kingdom:

Pastora: But not all the poor are like that—not all the rich are 'woe' either. We know the people that come here to the soup kitchen and the people are not like that . . . they do not have hunger for the Lord . . . they are only hungry for the food that they eat and so that is the reality.

2 Spanish *humilde* could be translated here as humble, poor or lowly. I chose the last option since the word "lowly" best conveys the ambiguity of the Spanish equivalent; lowly can refer to both low estate or poor or a combination of both. In this comment, it is clear that *humilde* refers to economic and probably also the status aspect since it stands in parallel position with *pobre*.

3 *Pastora* means literally a female pastor. In this community, *pastora* held the title of "pastor" alongside her husband and thus had considerable authority. Nevertheless, the primary leader seemed to be her husband.

Pastora's opinion seems to reflect a slightly different theological conviction and prioritizes the spiritual over the material more than the other group members. Her view also indicates that, in her opinion, others seemed to give too much weight to the material aspect of poverty. Accordingly, many people come to the church's soup kitchen because they are physically hungry and show little or no interest in spiritual matters, at least as was understood by this church group.

Despite this disagreement, many in the group pointed out that they had experienced marginalization and oppression in the society, particularly from the wealthy.

Juana: The rich already have their consolation and they are filled with pleasures and those who laugh because they have the power.

Daniel: [The rich think] that only the poor go to church⁴ [others: yes] and that they are also intellectually poor...that stupid people are in the church...this is what people think, right? And those who are hungry...or those who are lazy, why should they eat...they do not have anything, so if they have hands and are clever, why don't they work, [that is what] they say...therefore, they look at it from a different perspective; they do not look at it spiritually.

Rosa: And in the society people think that why are they [i.e. the poor] not [anything]...it is because they are lazy and for that reason they do not have anything to eat or with which to clothe themselves.

The experience of marginalization came across clearly in these comments. "Going to a (Pentecostal) church" is linked, in the eyes of many, to poverty, ignorance, stupidity, laziness, and physical deprivation. Juana particularly identified the rich with power. Daniel also mentioned that the wealthy were unable to look at their situation from the "spiritual perspective." This would seem to mean from the perspective of their marginalization, which was also to be equated with God's viewpoint to some extent.

Daniel also told of ridicule and the possibility of violence and even death for being misunderstood by others, especially the wealthy:

4 Undoubtedly, church refers here to a church within the sphere of Daniel's (and the group's) experience—that is, most likely Pentecostal and perhaps also other types of evangelical churches. It is unlikely that the reference here also includes the Catholic Church.

Daniel: Yes . . . also . . . and well, therefore they look at us with evil [intention] and . . . they also slander us, they judge us . . . and may even put us in jail; kill us for the same thing that they have this wrong idea and [are] mistaken about us.

This was the only comment that related experiences of violence and persecution in the form of jail and death throughout the entire research project.⁵ Daniel did not give further description, elaborate on the experience, or give clues whether he (or his acquaintances) had experienced something like this. Other churches and/or Christians that I conversed with made no reference to violence, jails, or extrajudicial executions either.⁶ In light of widespread corruption,⁷ a volatile political situation, and general unrest in Bolivia, it is clear that marginalized and powerless people are mistreated in a manner Daniel described.⁸ Yet, it is difficult to estimate to what extent such experiences are connected to Pentecostal believers and churches as such.⁹

Though not all the comments were explicitly connected to the group members' personal experiences, in many respects the group as a whole identified with the experience of social and economic marginalization. The connection between spiritual and socio-economic marginalization came across as well, as can be seen from the pastor's comment:

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- 5 During the pilot study with another church, two ladies were mugged on their way to the group Bible study. In that particular community, there were communal campaigns against violence. During the month of September (2011), the president of the Universidad Evangélica Boliviana also reported an increase of violent incidents and muggings in and in the vicinity of the campus. He called for vigilance and increased security in the area.
 - 6 During an intercultural Bible reading project with a non-charismatic evangelical church, some older members of the group mentioned harassment, ridicule, and throwing of stones; however, that happened in the 1960s and 1970s. In the countryside, some pastors mentioned that *evangélicos* are viewed with suspicion and that some children have been taught that *evangélicos* are of the devil. Children thus try to see if they may see their tail that resembles that of the devil. Nevertheless, these were anecdotal comments and the extent of this is difficult to estimate.
 - 7 On the experience of corruption, see especially chapter 7.
 - 8 During the empirical phase of the, there were protests against president Evo Morales. He wanted to build a road through Tipnis, which the local indigenous people opposed vehemently. The local media reported multiple incidents of violence and unrest over several months.
 - 9 For reports and experiences of discrimination among the group for being *evangélico*, see pp. 218–220.

Because I was . . . earlier I was rich in demons.¹⁰ Now I continue to be poor . . . before I fought for the watch¹¹ just by looking at it . . . it was bad . . . I continue to be poor . . . my wife says “give me” and I say “ya” my love.

Though the pastor identified himself as poor, it is important to note that, according to his testimony, he used to live in the streets and gutters of Santa Cruz prior to conversion. His socio-economic status had thus markedly improved as a result of adopting the Pentecostal faith. The group also pointed out that they had experienced marginalization among other Christians and in churches. The pastor told of a leader in one church who always occupied leading positions in the church and stole money from the church:

It was . . . inside the church, there was a leader who had various positions . . . he always had positions and one brother asked why does the pastor always have money; and it was said because he devours from everywhere, because he takes [i.e., steals] from everywhere.

Some also identified the so-called prosperity theology as a kind of ideological enemy and wished to distance from it:

Daniel: Another current of doctrine that defines the church that . . . one who does not have a mansion, one who does not have a car.

Pastor: —is in sin.

Daniel: —is not in good terms with God . . . because it is synonymous with prosperity.

Rosa told of her experience while visiting a rich people's church:

I went to a rich church or let's say of the high society and there sometimes people watch if you have or don't have money to see if you were to be a colleague.

10 “Rich in demons” most likely refers to the pastor's life before his conversion, rather than to an idea of literal demonic possession. According to his comments, he used to live in the gutters of Santa Cruz and supported his non-godly lifestyle by stealing and other illegal activities.

11 Pastor was talking about and looking at my watch as he made the comment.

Thus, Rosa indicated that discrimination along the socio-economic lines is present in the Pentecostal churches.

It is clear from these comments that the group's lived experience included economic poverty and marginalization within society as well as within some churches. The reference to church is probably to be understood here as the more wealthy or middle class charismatic or Pentecostal churches.

3.1.1.2 Salvation and Benefit

Salvation and God's benefits were important aspects throughout the group discussion. Though the poor were seen generally as the primary recipients of God's blessing and salvation, there were many exceptions. The rich were often linked though not identical with sinners. They focused on their riches, amassing wealth, and indulging in earthly pleasures, forgetting their spiritual life. Therefore they are "woe." They have power and authority, laugh arrogantly, and will receive their just recompense.

Juana: For the poor, for those who cry... He knows what the reward is... and for the rich... there will be justice... why? Because the rich are already comforted and filled; they are full of pleasures and those who laugh because they have the authority.

Daniel: The rich have hardened heart, they only think of their money.

Rosa: The rich already received their pay or already here on earth they amassed so much wealth and they forgot their spiritual life.

Nevertheless, here it is important to keep in mind *pastora's* comment that differed quite a bit from the rest of the group. That is, salvation belongs to all, equally, irrespective of one's social status. God can take the side of the rich as much as the poor.

Some other group members stated that the rich would only be saved through a miracle (with a reference to Luke 18:18–30), though free will seemed to have been attributed to others. Generally, the rich have a hardened heart and do not accept God.

The content of kingdom and salvation was reported to include spiritual and material benefits as illustrated by Rosa's comment:

The poor rejoice, theirs is the kingdom of heaven;¹² to the hungry because they will be satisfied with the word of God but also with the material; those who suffer because they will receive consolation; the persecuted because they are going to enjoy a great reward in heaven . . . the rich already received their reward or . . . they amassed many riches here on earth.

Pastor also brought forward this worldly aspect of salvation explicitly:

[The] majority of brothers believe that joy and happiness, and kingdom is when one dies . . . but now when I live God wants to give the promises.

The pastor indicated, perhaps surprisingly, that according to “majority” opinion, God’s benefits were restricted to the afterlife. He was convinced, however, that God gives benefits for a believer already in this life.¹³

It seems that salvation is offered to everyone, though the poor and marginalized are given a sort of preference. At least some benefits, however, seemed to be conditional.

Ruben: Because the poor have the kingdom . . . He invites that we have the salvation . . . because if we believe in him, we are going to have salvation . . . but to the poor, to the hungry, for them is the kingdom of God.

Daniel: The two groups [poor and rich] have two different attitudes . . . that which one sows also you are going to reap . . . poor and hungry sowed this . . . and the rich they love this world and loved wealth and they had to receive [their negative] reward.

Pastor: Only through a miracle a rich person can enter [the kingdom].

12 Rosa’s comment states “kingdom of heaven” instead of “kingdom of God.” The former is probably influenced by the parallel text in Matt 5:3, which reads “kingdom of heaven” (cf. Luke 6:20, “kingdom of God”).

13 It is difficult to know exactly what the pastor means by “joy and happiness”; that is, if it has a more emotional or material reference. The celebration of the church was certainly full of joy and happiness but the pastor seemed to lament the material conditions in which he and his family lived, as was seen earlier.

Juana: He came to announce the good news to us, heal the sick . . . all that needed him. He is just . . . He knows because he has love for everyone and abundance.

Salvation and benefits of God are available to everyone, but the wealthy are disposed to reject it because of their wealth and self-sufficiency, while the poor more readily accept God's salvation. Daniel's comment brought forward a slightly different perspective, which highlighted rewards and punishments based on one's actions. I will call this perspective action-consequence theology. According to this, the person receives benefits and/or negative consequences based on one's actions; that is, in accordance with the conduct or faithfulness to God's will (however that is perceived). This perspective is also sometimes called theology of retribution. Since I want to highlight the principle's concrete material aspects, however, and the possibility of influencing the consequences, I prefer to call it action-consequence theology.¹⁴

Daniel: I desire to be with Him . . . and when a person is happy without the person asking . . . he is going to give . . . and also with 'woes . . . my son did not behave . . . he is going to receive his due . . . this does not demonstrate that God is evil but that human beings will give an account of their actions.

Daniel's comment highlights how human beings are accountable to God and as such refers to justice. The second line employed a familial metaphor of a disobedient son for negative consequences and the first emphasized the positive inner disposition as the basis for rewards.

Similarly, but from a slightly different perspective, Rosa employed the same kind of logic though she brought Scriptural arguments to the fore more explicitly:

God came to appear to all . . . God gave His only son to give us life and salvation and through His word to believe . . . and appropriate that word . . . as it says blessed is the person who does these things; and I also remember Deuteronomy speaks about blessings in, I think in 28 . . . blessed shall be your granaries . . . but everyone sows a condition . . . therefore, to receive all the things from God there are conditions . . . one must give, surrender.

14 It needs to be noted though that the action and consequence should not be seen overly mechanically but rather as a dynamic and somewhat vague principle.

Rosa's comment juxtaposed God's free gift of salvation and the subsequent human responsibility of appropriating the gift; this then results in presumably further benefits from God. It is notable that terminology of blessing or "blessed"¹⁵ is employed here, in reference to both Luke 6:20–26 and Deuteronomy 28 (cf. Deut. 28:4, 8 RV).¹⁶

Salvation and benefits were important aspects in the group's reading of the passage. Though it was available to anyone, the poor and marginalized seemed to be the primary recipients of the benefits, partly due to their faith and more favorable inner disposition. Salvation and kingdom included numerous benefits ranging from eternal life in heaven to healing and concrete material benefits. At times, benefits seemed to be available to everyone and without qualifications, while at other times, strong faith and proactive action seemed to be the requirements.

3.1.1.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

The hermeneutical approach to the passage by the group clearly emphasized the present-day reality and experience of the community; therefore, the focus was on the forward effects of the text. There were few, if any, attempts to separate the ancient context of the Bible and the present-day reality; rather, the horizons were fused without concern for possible historical or cultural gaps. Similarly, literary structure was acknowledged only to the extent that group members made a distinction between two categories of people that corresponded to "blessings" and "woes" respectively.

One of the characteristic exegetico-hermeneutical approaches of the group was the back and forth movement between the text and the lived experience of the community. This did not mean, however, a neat distinction between a close reading of the text that was followed by application. Rather, the movement flowed back and forth freely and, at times without distinction, as can be seen in Marcos's comments:

[The text] refers to His [God's] sons and . . . to us but it also refers to . . . let's say to the rich and sinners . . . condemning them, like one part happy and the other part sad. And because they are already enjoying [life] here on earth, right? . . . there are some rich who accept God and want to follow

15 Spanish *bienaventurada*.

16 The section of blessings in Deuteronomy 28 was invoked rather frequently in different Pentecostal churches where I visited. Most often blessings were connected to giving money to the church in one way or another. The church to which MG belonged, however, did not invoke that passage, at least during those times when I visited the congregation.

God despite their riches . . . Santa Cruz is a department of businessmen, because sometimes one sees them with their trucks . . . and one is not encouraged to preach the word [to them].

In other instances, a key word or concept was lifted out of the literary context (e.g., poor and rich) for further reflection, elaboration, and appropriation. In the case of poor and rich, the terms could be employed with varying degrees of literalness. This approach often brought about the fusion of text-reality, present-day experience, and the Pentecostal tradition as received and adopted by the community.

The resulting discourse also led to explicit and implicit appropriation of the text. In the appropriation much of the commentary remained at the level of suggestion rather than explicit adoption of new practice or concrete action. There were also a number of comments where group members encouraged one another to seek and surrender to God more fully.

Roxana: That we seek God more every day with much fervor and heart full of love. And that we are always asking His purpose what He wants for my life and do in accordance with what God has commanded.

This was often linked to an emphasis on personal responsibility, which at times was spelled out in terms of action-consequence theology. It seems that this was not a new development or practice but rather a common tradition within the community. The key word “blessing” perhaps triggered the action-consequence discourse since it has a catchword linkage to Deuteronomy 28, as Rosa’s comment indicated. Since it was such an integral part of the group’s theology, however, it probably would have emerged in any discussion that dealt with practical issues and conduct in the daily life of individuals and the community.¹⁷ It is difficult to evaluate how action-consequence theology functions concretely at this point since no practical experiences were shared during the reading.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the group members did have a rather positive disposition toward it even though they were socio-economically marginalized.¹⁹

17 According to my observations in various Pentecostal churches and communities, action-consequence theology is quite a common feature. It came across quite frequently in sermons, testimonies, exhortations, prayers, and short Bible expositions.

18 For more concrete examples of action-consequence theology, see chapter 4. For fuller discussion, see chapter 4.

19 One could easily take a logical step and think that one is poor and marginalized due to one’s own actions or disobedience to God. The group did not entertain such an idea.

The group's understanding of the text seemed to elicit comments that favored the poor/marginalized and criticized the materially rich, both in society and within churches, even if the door was left open for the rich to accept salvation. In this sense, there seemed to be a connection between the text and the group's comments. The group's dissatisfaction and social critique, however, did not translate into new forms of action or practice. This may partly reflect the marginalized status and powerlessness of the group. Rather, their focus was on their own community and church. The church operates a small soup kitchen that offers physical food and spiritual and emotional support to church members and the surrounding community. Thus, it is possible to see that the reading of the text prompted a challenge and urgency to continue extending both spiritual and material help to people in need.

Daniel: Something important that we take into account . . . there is a lot of people that do not have anything to eat . . . there is a lot of people who are hungry for me [God] . . . what am I doing based on this urgency?

In addition to this, the text was also understood as an invitation to salvation, healing, and the kingdom of God.

While there was no one single heuristic key that opened up the meaning of the text for the group, the experience of social marginalization and poverty seemed to have influenced the way the group interpreted the passage. This functioned in conjunction with the group's Pentecostal tradition with its emphasis on spiritual and material salvation and communal fellowship. Within this framework, the poor and hungry were given a strong material dimension in addition to the spiritual and ethical ones. The rich and sinners were seen as closely related categories as well. Even with this, however, there was no unanimity on this matter within the group, as *pastora's* comments indicated. In her experience and interpretation, the materially poor were not given priority and God can take the side of the rich as much as the poor.

The reasons for the poor being poor were not discussed, but the rich were generally considered rich due to their love of money and/or because they had amassed wealth and ignored God. Yet, the group members remained largely poor and marginalized though they saw themselves as those who were saved and who possessed the kingdom. There were also no indications that the group's

This shows that action-consequence theology should be seen as dynamic rather than mathematical in nature. Communal discernment and pastoral authority seemed to be the most important factors in the process of evaluating how to apply the perspective in any given situation.

poverty was a sign of God's disfavor. Quite the contrary, the group critiqued the prosperity doctrine that made one's material possessions a reflection of one's standing with God. In any case, the group did not articulate reasons for their own condition of material poverty and marginalization. If my interpretation is close to the mark here, there seems to be some tension between the poor and hungry as objects of God's favor and the action-consequence theology as such. Finally, the structural reasons and/or societal consequences were not brought explicitly to bear on the discussion, either in the reading of the text or its appropriation. Rather, the focus was on the individuals and the church community.

3.1.2 *Privileged Group's Reading of Luke 6:17–26*

3.1.2.1 Possessions and Social Status

The spontaneous reading of the group started with an interesting comment.²⁰ A self-professing former Catholic woman gave a glimpse of how her understanding of the text had changed since her initiation into Pentecostal community:

Carina: When I was Catholic I really understood that the kingdom of heavens belonged to the poor, but poor in economic terms . . . yes . . . and the rich were going to be discarded. But obviously this was only logos or . . . that God is talking about another thing, of the spiritually poor more than economically poor.

In opposition to Carina's former understanding as a Catholic, it is clear that the poor here are understood in emphatically spiritual terms. The pastor of the church was in agreement with her and identified the poor with morally humble, adding "we need to demonstrate humility."

As I inquired of the specific identification of the poor, hungry, et al., in 6:20–26, the group brought forth various views and answers. The poor in 6:20 were generally seen as referring to spiritually poor or humble, which view the pastor particularly championed:

Pastor: Yes, of the poor in spirit, of the humble . . . Blessed are you poor because yours is the kingdom of God, right? Or humility, right?

20 The privileged group's spontaneous reading was nearly five times longer than that of the marginalized group's spontaneous reading. Nevertheless, the overall time for Bible studies of each group was not drastically different.

Juana: He was talking about the things of the poor . . . of the kingdom and of spiritual poverty, we know, but spiritually. He was speaking in this manner.

Pastor: He was speaking in the supernatural . . . spiritual.²¹

José, on the other hand, saw a clear reference to economic realities in addition to spiritual ones:

José: During the time of Jeremiah and then in the time of Jesus . . . people became increasingly harder and the poor poorer . . . in the first place I understand these people as spiritually poor but also economically poor—they didn't have money—the Lord was saying that time is going to come when this system that you have here, corrupt, evil, where only money matters will no longer be.

It is significant that José pointed out that poverty in Jesus' time was connected to an evil system. This betrayed an awareness of larger socio-political dimension of poverty. He also saw an important economic aspect in woes to the rich:

José: Woes to the rich . . . the rich are generally self-sufficient . . . and to obtain their riches leave aside all the things that are important for the Lord . . . to obtain their goals . . . and the victim of these rich has generally been the poor.

Apart from José, the "woes" received less attention and were often spiritualized. Juana commented on them briefly:

We see two kingdoms. It is possible that the poor and hungry were happy in the spiritual kingdom that Jesus came to implement on earth and woes to the rich in this reign.

Carina, who initially focused exclusively on the spiritual aspect, seemed to vacillate between the exclusively spiritual understanding of poverty and the view that included the spiritual and various material aspects of poverty:

21 There is an interesting difference between the way the pastor here and Daniel in the marginalized group understood spiritual.

Carina: The poor in spirit, those who are hungry, and those who are hated . . . it is a hope that he [Jesus] is giving to the poor, to the poor in spirit, to the economically poor, and this to the sick who suffered . . . He [Jesus] spoke of the things of the poor . . . or about the kingdom and poverty spiritually.

Carina's comments were perhaps representative in that she spiritualized the poor in the text earlier, yet she included material aspects later on. As can be seen, apart from José, there was a general tendency to spiritualize the poor and poverty.

As the group discussed the poor and poverty in their own context, they looked at poverty from outside rather than inside. José, for example, told of an experience when he saw poverty-stricken children on the street:

It happens when we are attending to the poor or other people. One sees a need, a need [and] in a moment you are saddened in your heart . . . one time I was passing a street and one boy with his small sister; they were beggars and what moved me was that the older took care of his younger brother and tried to help him and my heart ached and I said, "Aye, Lord" . . . but it does not help that I stop and say, "No, here you have all of mine [and] now I am poor, he is in better situation and I become the beggar like you." It is not like this but my heart was moved.

He also opined that the rich were worse in Jesus' day than the people living currently:

José: These rich people, so one understands that before, in that time, when there were less riches it was [also] more difficult to be rich . . . one had to step on more heads. So they were a lot more unjust; now it is not so much, before it was very bad.

The pastor talked a lot about wealth and his own financial prosperity. He also linked economic prosperity with inner spiritual character:

Yes, but now this is great . . . this is what I saw in the churches . . . one time they said 'you do not have money', [well] it is not the same with us. For example in many of our so called friends' churches, because they were never our friends, many people questioned our prosperity . . . but I have said to them . . . prosperity is not a point [of arrival]; but it is a certainty that one is going to walk in it. Now, one cannot go to material riches

without before being spiritually rich . . . not to be prepared with businesses and accounts but your heart; how are you going to manage this that the Lord gives you, right?

Another interesting facet in the group's focus was the highlighting of persecution by the pastor and *pastora*. While *pastora* related personal experiences of ridicule that she had experienced for her faith, the pastor discussed the dualism between the world and the kingdom of God in more general terms.

Pastora: The other day I went to *feria*²² and . . . they [friends] stopped and came to say, "Hi, how are you?" [and] that here and there and then one [said], "Why don't you go to the meeting of the priests?" . . . I was there [at *feria*] with my sister. And I saw something, I saw the discrimination.

Pastor: Woe to you when all the people speak well of you . . . they will always criticize children of God . . . we worry who could pat our back. Now if you have the living Spirit, you know that this is not the correct way because they also criticized the master [i.e., Jesus].

As can be seen, the pastor in particular alludes to 6:26 to indicate how the values and attitudes of people are different from the kingdom and that one should not be surprised of criticism. He seemed to have a number of values in mind since he had earlier mentioned the importance of loving one another, forgiveness, and not reacting with evil to other people's rudeness, among other things. He also emphasized how spiritual and demonic powers often work in and behind people's lives and how the spiritual forces are opposed to the values of the kingdom.

Overall, the group exhibited a tendency to spiritualize poverty, though some added ethical and socio-economic dimensions to it from time to time. The "woes" of the rich were mentioned significantly less. The group looked at poverty from the outside and did not identify with being poor or marginalized, apart from *pastora*'s comments of being ridiculed for her faith. Nevertheless, José was concerned that the church ought to demonstrate social responsibility and conscience. Though the pastor discussed material wealth and prosperity frequently, he was of the opinion that the poor were being discriminated against in the society and the church.

22 She is referring to the upscale *fare* that is in the city.

3.1.2.2 Salvation and Benefit

The group viewed kingdom/salvation as spiritual salvation, healing, and material benefits.

Juana: [Jesus] is able to give them healing and liberate all who came near to him.

Pastor: This is the kingdom. It consists of setting people free, this is what we need to do . . . there are people who God blesses [financially] because He wants to; [it is] because . . . He knows that they are going to give.

Pastora: [It is] a message of hope, of certainty, of security, because the gospel . . . it is good news, this is the gospel.

José articulated his ideas of kingdom and salvation in a slightly different way:

José: The evidence of his sin was his poverty—the Lord says, “No!” The evidence that they are going to be in the kingdom is their poverty . . . there is mathematical inversion—now this sounds a bit strange, does it not?²³

This perspective departs significantly from the rest of the group, and the reversal theme is not discussed further or commented by others. It also seemed to go directly against the action-consequence theology. Pastor, on the other hand, largely ignored not only José’s comments but also the text per se and preferred to relate his spiritual views and experiences as an example for the group:

The other day I was praying to the Lord. I woke up on Saturday at night and the Lord showed me all of the evil that is in the world and Matthew 24 says that the evil will increase . . . lack of forgiveness . . . that is what really nullifies the efficacy of the power of God . . . there is no power in what you say and you are not in the presence of God, you are not going to convince [anyone of the gospel].

23 In another section, José made an interesting comment, stating that Jesus was harassed already as a child because everybody knew that he was an illegitimate child. As the Jewish religious leaders kept persecuting and harassing him, he demonstrated to them that he was the one who determined who was part of the kingdom—he was the one who determined the reversal and who was in his kingdom. Thus, José connected Jesus’ childhood experience as a bullied child without a father to his declaration of beatitudes, which effectively excluded the religious leaders and the rich from the kingdom.

Carina and José interpreted the promises following each beatitude/woe as the coming of the Spirit or as promises of hope. Others did not engage the text as closely but related more of their own (spiritual) experiences or views that were only loosely connected to the text. Carina also added that the first group received a promise and the second a consequence for their actions.

The group also briefly discussed prosperity theology. Some wanted to distance from it to some extent but pastor seemed to approve a type of prosperity gospel, at least in practice:

Juana: [discussing prosperity theology] More than a church, it is a denomination [and] a tendency. I don't know if it is called theology but they use biblical texts to support [the connection between] spiritual prosperity and material prosperity. If one is spiritually prosperous it means that you need to have money . . . it is . . . what we mean by theology of liberation; all of this has to do with it also. So it is called the theology of prosperity.²⁴

Pastor: The doctrine, but if you base your foundations in Jesus Christ, in reality you are never going to have lack.

Juana: Right.

Pastor: God is real and not everybody is called to be a millionaire. There are people who God blesses because He wants to, because He knows that they are going to give.

Whereas Juana opposed the simple connection between material and spiritual prosperity, the pastor seemed to advocate it (see esp. below). He also connected extravagant wealth (millionaire) to a specific calling and God's will on one hand, and on the other hand to generosity on the part of the recipient of God's blessing. The pastor also quoted what appeared later to be his favorite Bible verse: "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life" (Prov 22:4) to support his views of prosperity. The action-consequence theology appeared in his comments often. It was also used to support his notion of material prosperity:

Pastor: The more we submit to God, it is like a son, right? If your son . . . does what you say and you have money . . . you will give him even

24 It seems that Juana confuses liberation theology and prosperity theology here.

a car made of gold, because it will not affect him—you cannot have material riches before spiritual riches.

The pastor clearly saw a strong connection between spiritual riches and material prosperity. That is, the very connection that Juana opposed earlier. In the pastor's example God is like a father who gives extravagant gifts (golden car!) to his son provided that the son obeys the father and is not negatively influenced by the gift. The correct disposition of the heart is a prerequisite to material riches and the connection between the two seems to be rather close.

Despite his strong tendency to advocate prosperity, the pastor added that poor are often discriminated both in the society and the church, of which he disapproved:

Right, also if a person comes . . . and does not have what to eat . . . at least you buy him something. But now what is sad is that there is a lot of discrimination in the society and the churches . . . why? It is because the heart of man is such.

Nevertheless, he also believes that “there are no poor in the kingdom”. Rather, he stated that

In the kingdom there are no poor, you will always have a roof and always will have food . . . God is never going to leave you . . . it is impossible . . . that you do not have enough . . . there is going to be a moment when God is going to give . . . but it is easy to give a person money, but this is not the solution.

Except on an *ad hoc* basis, the pastor did not advocate giving material help to the poor per se; rather, God was seen as the provider. He did not completely rule out help by churches but seemed to discourage it because for him the reason for poverty appeared to be exclusively spiritual:

Pastor: There are certain churches that help . . . but in reality it is not about giving money but giving them the Word . . . it is easier to give money but this is not the solution; to buy a house, they go and sell it for drugs, the solution is to give them [the] spiritual [message].²⁵

25 Even if the pastor's emphasis on the spiritual over the material is clearly evident, I detect a bit of rhetorical exaggeration in this comment.

Presumably then, the pastor did not think that the focus of the churches should be helping the poor, although individuals might do that if a dire need presented itself. In fact, in some cases, it could be detrimental. In any case, if one enters the kingdom, God will fulfill one's needs.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, José had commented earlier that the church has a social conscience and without that it would not be called the Christian church. He did not make any comments, however, regarding how the church should engage in helping the poor and the needy. Nevertheless, since he was not in a position of authority in the church, his comments might have been subtle hints that their own church should focus more on social responsibility. Clearly these two views were in conflict with one another, though there was no sign of explicit polemic during the group conversation.

In the group's perception, salvation and benefit covered a multitude of areas, from spiritual salvation to material prosperity. While the group did not seem to have a unified view of the degree of prosperity and God's material blessings, economic prosperity still played an important part in the discussion.

3.1.2.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As with the socio-marginalized group's reading, there appeared to be no new action or praxis that was implemented as the result of the study. In fact, when I asked specifically about what the text spoke to in their present-day reality or what action could/should be taken as a result of reading the text, the comments remained on a general level. Some of the suggestions included the need to engage in spiritual activities more fervently, such as a message of hope, loving one another, and the like:

Pastor: This [setting people free, healing] is what we need to do, but we are not effective in it.

Juana: [We need] to love one another more.

Pastora also related a story how she stopped during her busy day to share a spiritual message with a poor person. The person "accepted the Lord" and is going to heaven now, related *pastora*, but no further actions were stated or implied. It seemed to me that José's comments on social engagement could have possibly elicited new action or praxis, but the pastor's theological views and strong authority decisively impeded any new developments to this direction.

Hermeneutically, there seemed to be at least two directions within the group. First, the pastor mainly related his spiritual experiences and used these both as an entry point and heuristic key to unlock the text's meaning (even if

the text was not often engaged closely). Carina made a distinction between her former Catholic understanding of the passage, since it was just “logos,” and her new spiritual understanding which was superior in her view.²⁶ The pastor’s personal experience of material prosperity was probably linked to the way he employed action-consequence theology in appropriation of the passage.²⁷ He also viewed the poor in 6:20 in exclusively spiritual terms and focused primarily on 6:22 and 6:26. These gave support to his experience of rejection both by the “world”²⁸ as well as among some Christian groups.

José, who followed the text more closely and used his own historical background information and creative imagination to decipher the meaning of the text, represented the second view. He was also the only one in the group who voiced the importance of the church’s social responsibility. The use of imagination and the separation of horizons reflected a different hermeneutical approach. Though it is difficult to be certain, this approach might possibly have contributed to differing religious and societal implications of the passage compared to that of the pastor. At times, José’s comments of reversal were opposite those of the pastor. He also seemed to be somewhat surprised at his own comments at times, which probably indicates that he was unfamiliar with the text. José’s approach could perhaps be characterized as somewhat more text-centered and less spiritualizing than the rest of the group. The majority of the group seemed to align themselves somewhere between the pastor’s

26 It is difficult to say what Carina exactly meant by her former understanding of the passage as *logos* in contradistinction to her current understanding. Did she mean that her former understanding of the text (poor in text = materially poor) was incorrect? Or did she make a distinction between what the text meant in the historical context (poor in text = materially poor) and what it meant today (poor in text = materially poor but through Spirit’s guidance it now means spiritually poor)? Presumably, she follows a strand of Pentecostal hermeneutics that makes a distinction between the written word of the Bible and the actualized spoken message or word/passage of the Bible received by the Spirit’s revelation. The written word is called *logos* and the spoken/revealed word is called *rhema*. The distinction between the two Greek words is based on mistaken semantic fields of both, according to which *logos* refers to the “written word” and *rhema* to the “spoken word.” It seems that Carina did not speculate on the *logos* or textual meaning so much as to emphasize the spiritual poverty as the main meaning, though in her later commentary she extended this to include material aspects.

27 See chapter 4 where the pastor talks more openly about his financial prosperity and socio-economic standing.

28 The “world” is generally understood by the Pentecostals to represent negative values and evil forces that oppose individuals and the community. Depending on the particular type of Pentecostal community, the contradistinction may be seen in strongly or mildly dualistic terms.

“pneumatic” approach and José’s historical-imaginative reading. Nevertheless, the group rejected the simple connection between spiritual and material prosperity, even if the pastor entertained the idea and came close to what could be termed prosperity theology.

3.1.3 *Comparison of Marginalized and Privileged Reading of Luke 6:20–26*

As has become clear, the readings of both groups bear similarities and differences. Both groups focused on near identical issues and topics but looked at them from somewhat different perspectives and came to different conclusions.²⁹ This was evident already during the spontaneous reading phase when the privileged group (PG) emphasized the spiritual aspect of poverty whereas the marginalized group (MG) leaned on material and social aspects of poverty in addition to the religious one. Similarly, during the study process, both groups emphasized material aspects of the kingdom. Nevertheless, some in the MG literally identified with the poor in the text and saw the poor and hungry as literal recipients of the kingdom and more open to God’s salvation. The rich were often connected with sinners because they had amassed wealth and ignored God—however, a door was left open for their miraculous conversion. The privileged group, on the other hand, tended to spiritualize the poor and the rich were identified as self-sufficient people who ignored God, not the rich per se.

Perhaps one of the most interesting differences was the treatment of action-consequence theology by each group. It is difficult to tell what prompted the discussion, though it seems possible that the reason was the key words “blessed” and “woe,” which resemble the idea of blessings and curses in Deut. 27–28, as Rosa pointed out (MG). The pastor of the privileged group saw a connection between material prosperity and spiritual obedience though not everyone agreed with this idea. Apparently, God’s material blessings do not know any bounds (cf. “golden car” and millionaire) according to the pastor. He also insisted that the only (or the most important) reason for people being poor is spiritual. This was also seen in rather individualistic terms. On the other hand, though the MG saw a general connection between blessing and faithfulness to God, they did not allude to material prosperity as a sign of God’s favor. Though both groups used an example of the obedient son who received good gifts from his father as a metaphor for obtaining God’s blessing, the application of the metaphor was interpreted quite differently.

29 It is obvious to some extent that the same topics and themes emerged in both groups. After all, both groups read the same texts and both groups the same questions to ponder after the initial spontaneous reading.

Each group's hermeneutical stance also pointed to practical implications; however, it seems that the text *per se* had less influence on the praxis of each community than the underlying tradition/ideology and experiences that guided the reading. Though José (PG) insisted that the church is not a Christian church if it does not have a social conscience, the rest of the PG largely ignored his comments. If the pastor's view were representative of the church as a whole, the spiritual and ethical poverty was given such priority over material poverty that it is difficult to foresee any social involvement that targets the poor and marginalized, except on an *ad hoc* basis. The MG, on the other hand, found hope and was challenged by the text to continue their engagement with their community, even though their own situation of material lack and its relation to obedience to God remained ambivalent. The pastor (MG), however, insisted that God's blessings—without explicitly connecting them to conditions—are for the here and now.

Despite the fact that there was some variety within both groups, it seemed that the social location of the communities played a role in the way each community approached and interpreted the text. Nevertheless, being rich and privileged or poor and marginalized was not highlighted as the primary identity marker in either community. Nor was social location *per se* considered by the communities themselves to be the heuristic key that opened the meaning of the text or their approach in interpretation. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a connection between the experiences of marginality/privilege that directed groups to interpret certain aspects of the text (and their own reality) in a certain way. This was perhaps most notable in the way the MG emphasized the privileged position of the materially poor over against the rich as well as the way action-consequence theology was viewed. Thus, the socio-economic experience of the community, along with the existing tradition and spiritual experience, could be said to provide a sort of dual hermeneutical key to the meaning of the text.³⁰ The resulting discourse then elicited possible praxeological effects for both communities, though both mainly affirmed the existing practices rather than created new ones.

As demonstrated above, both groups' exegetico-hermeneutical approaches were more connected to their communal and spiritual experiences than to close reading of the text. Hence, historical and literary aspects of the text and context were largely ignored, even when brief comments regarding the historical context or literary structure of the text were presented. One reason for this might have been the groups' inability to incorporate the information into their pragmatically oriented reading. On the other hand, virtually nobody was

30 It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to weigh the influence of each aspect with any certainty.

interested in asking historical questions or querying the differences between present-day reality and historical context. The only exception to this was José (PG) who possessed some historical information of first century social dynamics and incorporated the data into his reading.

Before exploring these ideas further, I will conduct an historical reading of the same text (Luke 6:20–26) and then explore the relationship between the groups' interpretations and my own historical reading of the passage. The purpose is not to demonstrate the superiority of the historical reading or vice versa, but rather to see similarities, differences, and possible avenues of connection and interaction between the two approaches.

3.2 Historical³¹ Readings of 6:20–26

Joseph Fitzmyer has noted in his commentary that “[t]here is probably no other part of the gospel tradition that has undergone more diverse interpretation over the centuries than the Sermon on the Mount.”³² This includes the beatitudes, even if Luke's version has received less attention than its counterpart in Matthew.³³ Scholars contest nearly every area of the beatitudes/woes, whether it is the original wording, audience, purpose, or meaning. Much depends on the critical approach adopted and the specific method applied to the reading of the text. Though there has been an increasing interest in various new methods, the traditional historical-critical approaches seem to dominate much of the literature, particularly before the mid-1990s. There are countless studies that try to reconstruct the original wording and setting of the beatitudes/woes and the subsequent levels of traditions, whether in Jesus' ministry, Q, or in the

31 I should probably add “privileged” before “historical” in the title since my reading, or anybody else's who conducts a historical reading, is generally done from the position of privilege—even if one sympathized with liberation theology or other emancipatory stances.

32 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX, Vol. 1*, Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 28 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 629.

33 Compare, for example, the length of Betz's treatment of Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain. Primacy of SM also becomes clear when one compares the history of interpretation (Hans D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matt 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49)* [Hermeneia; trans. A. Collins; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 91–567, 571–640; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 1–70).

extant gospels and early Christian tradition.³⁴ Though source-critical studies are of some value and will be reviewed briefly, the focus of this study is not the original wording or setting of the beatitudes but rather that of Luke's time and audience toward the end of the first century and the subsequent dialogue with the present-day readings by the two Bolivian groups involved in the study.

A comparison between Matthew's and Luke's versions of the beatitudes reveals similarities and differences in structure, form, and vocabulary. Perhaps the most notable of these are the following: Matthew has nine beatitudes (5:3–12) but lacks the corresponding woes, and Luke includes four beatitudes and four parallel woes (Luke 6:20–26).³⁵ Out of Matthew's nine beatitudes, Luke lacks the third (meek; οἱ πραεῖς Matt 5:4) as well as the fifth (the merciful; οἱ ἐλεήμονες Matt 5:7), the sixth (the pure in heart; οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ Matt 5:8), and the seventh (the peacemakers; οἱ εἰρηνοποιοὶ Matt 5:9). Matthew has probably added οἱ τῷ πνεύματι (in spirit; Matt 5:3//Luke 6:20) that Luke does not have. Luke's third beatitude (who weep; οἱ κλαίοντες Luke 6:21) uses a different verb from Matthew's account (who mourn; οἱ πενθοῦντες 5:4), and as a result the following subordinate clause has a different meaning. Matthew uses the third person pronoun οἱ αὐτῶν (those) whereas Luke employs second person ὑμετέρα (you). Both include³⁶ a lengthy final beatitude about persecution and exclusion, though the wordings in each are considerably different (Matt 5:10–12//Luke 6:22–23). Luke also includes the adverb “now” (νῦν) in

34 See for example, David Catchpole, *The Quest for Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 16–23, 81–94; Michael D. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm. I–II* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 346–360; John S. Kloppenborg, “Blessing and Marginality: The ‘Persecution Beatitude’ in Q, Thomas, and Early Christianity,” *Forum* 2 (1986): 36–56; Luis Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 19–32; Walter Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1981), 74–105; Robert A. Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: Entrance Requirements or Eschatological Blessings,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 415–434. Most of the major commentaries devote considerable space to the source and redaction critical aspects. See, for example, Francois Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002); Darrel L. Bock, *Luke Vol. 1. 1:1–9:50* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994); Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke (Sagra Pagina; Collegeville, Minn., Liturgical Press, 1991)*; John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20* (Vol. 35a; WBC; Dallas: Word Publisher, 1989); Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*; Howard I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978).

35 Matthew does include “woes” in other sections of the gospel (e.g., Matt 23:13–29).

36 Matthew has two persecution/exclusion beatitudes that are sometimes treated as a single beatitude and other times as two separate ones.

the second and third beatitude and woe, perhaps to emphasize the present³⁷ aspect of the kingdom. Finally, Luke uses the term ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (the kingdom of God) whereas Matthew prefers the characteristic ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (the kingdom of heaven) probably as a circumlocution for God.

Due to these features (and others), scholars have tried to search for the original setting and wording³⁸ of the beatitudes as well as to find out whether the woes are part of earlier tradition or emerge from Luke's creative hand. Many scholars think that Luke preserves a more original wording of the beatitudes with the exception of the second person ὑμετέρα (you).³⁹ The second person pronoun fits rather awkwardly into the second part of the beatitude since the first part is a third person clause (despite e.g. RSV).⁴⁰

In the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish tradition, both forms of beatitudes are known though the third person form is more common.⁴¹ In the New Testament the third person form is also more common.⁴² As John Topel has stated, however, it is possible that Luke (or Jesus) imitated the HB notion and used the second person form to intensify the saying and direct it specifically to his audience.⁴³ If one sees the second person ὑμετέρα (you) as original or pre-Lucan, it is more difficult to retain the corresponding woes as originals unless they were uttered to two different audiences and were brought together either by Q or Luke. Perhaps more important is the question of whether the first three Lucan beatitudes were originally a separate unit and the fourth (on persecution) was added later. Scholarly opinions differ though many think that the

37 So, for example, John L. Topel, *Children of the Compassionate God: A Theological Exegesis of Luke 6:20–49* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), 60. The coming of salvation “now” or “today” is a unique feature in Luke (2:11; 4:21; 13:32; 19:5, 9; 23:43) among the synoptic gospels. νῦν is missing from some manuscripts in 6:21, 25, the latter instance having a bit more support (e.g., A, D, K, P, Γ, Ψ).

38 I presume that Luke or the author of Luke-Acts was a male so I will use the third person masculine pronoun to address the author. In principle it is possible that the author was a female though this is far less likely in light of the position of women in the ancient world.

39 Goulder, *Luke*, 350–351; Cathpole, *The Quest for Q*, 82–83.

40 For example, Goulder, *Luke*, 350–352. It is clear that later scribal additions tried to harmonize Luke's account to fit Matthew's (see variant reading αὐτῶν in W, ff², sy^s, sa, bo^{ms}).

41 For examples of third person forms, see, Ps 1:1; Prov 8:34; Dan 12:12; Tob 13:14; Pss. Sol. 4:23; 17:44; 18:6; Sir 25:7–10; Tob 13:12; 1 En. 99:2, 52. For second person forms, see Deut 33:29; Isa 32:20; Eccl 10:17; 1 En. 58:2.

42 For third person forms in the New Testament see, Luke 7:23; 10:23; 11:27–28; 23:29; John 20:29; Jam 1:12; Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 22:7. For second person forms, see Luke 14:14; Matt 16:17; John 13:17, though these retain less of the exclamatory force than the third person statements.

43 Topel, *Children of the Compassionate*, 86.

persecution beatitude was added later.⁴⁴ However, Jerome Neyrey interprets the beatitudes in light of the final persecution beatitude and insists that it is authentic pre-Lucan tradition.⁴⁵ It is the connection between poverty/hunger and ostracism/violence that makes Neyrey's suggestion plausible.

It is more difficult to know the origins of Luke's woes. Woes in HB and Second Temple literature are generally prophetic utterances that proclaim doom or lamentation (Isa 5:8–23; 33:1; Jer 48:1; 50:27; Amos 5:18; Zech 11:17; 1 En. 98–99). As such, the Lucan woes bear resemblance to this tradition though the juxtaposition of four beatitudes and four woes, which seems to be unique to Luke.⁴⁶ Francois Bovon thinks that the woes are secondary since they are not found in later patristic tradition;⁴⁷ however, this alone hardly suffices as a reason for their inauthenticity. It is also possible that Luke received them from the L source or from other traditional material⁴⁸ and reworked them to fit symmetrically with the beatitudes.⁴⁹ Rene Krüger, writing from a structuralist perspective, thinks that it is possible to view the woes as reflecting logical opposites of the beatitudes; thus they reflect the authentic spirit of Jesus regardless of their literal authenticity.⁵⁰ It seems more plausible that Luke worked the existing traditions to his own ends to form the parallelism, than that he created them

44 Kloppenborg, "Blessing and Marginality," 36–56; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 221, sees the persecution beatitude as traditional, perhaps going back to Jesus, though it was transmitted separately due to its differing form (cf. 1 Pet 4:14, Jas 1:12, Matt 5:10, Herm. 105:6–8). Betz opines that the three first beatitudes were put together and the fourth was added later as a "suggestion" (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 578).

45 Jerome H. Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family, Loss of Honor: The Cultural Context of the Original Makarisms in Q," in *The Social World of the New Testament. Insights and Models* (eds. J. Neyrey and E. Steward; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 92–97.

46 The juxtaposition of congratulation and woe or lamentation per se is not unique to Luke (see e.g. Isa 3:10; Eccl 10:16; Tob. 13:12, 14; 2 Bar. 10:6–7; 1 En. 5:7; 99; 2 En. 42; 52). See also Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 586.

47 Bovon, *Luke 1*, 221.

48 Goulder (*Luke*, 355–356) suggests that Luke used Matt 5:19, 6:1–18, and 23 to create woes. He also sees the sharp critique in many parts of Luke as important to his argument (Luke 3:7; 12:55; 13:3, 5; 16:15; Acts 2:22; 7:51). While this seems possible, the haphazard way of gathering materials is not convincing. Marshall thinks that the sources and pre-history question "defies solution" (*The Gospel of Luke*, 245). I tend to agree with him. He thinks the pre-Lucan tradition was not fixed but went through several stages, oral and written, before finding its way to Matthew and Luke respectively (Ibid., 245–246).

49 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 575.

50 René Krüger, La proclama de una inversión total. La estructuración de Lucas 6:20–26," in *Militarismo y defensa del pueblo* (RIBLA 8; San José: DEI, 1991). Cited 10 October 2011. Online: <http://www.clailatino.org/ribla/ribla8/contenido.htm>.

using Matthew, HB/LXX materials (such as Isa 61:1–2 or Isa 65:13–16/66:5)⁵¹ or by using mere logical parallelism (cf. Krüger). Since the question of origins is not the purpose here, suffice it to say that it seems likely that the third evangelist used his source(s) (Q and/or similar oral traditions) and adapted it to his particular situation.⁵²

As alluded to earlier, Luke 6:20–26 portrays the beatitudes and woes in symmetrical antithetic parallelism where blessedness or congratulation is attributed to the poor and the corresponding lamentation to the rich. Similarly, each of the first three beatitudes and woes is followed by a subordinate ὅτι (for) clause that indicates the resulting positive or negative reward. The fourth beatitude/woe is probably longer to indicate its emphatic position,⁵³ and the subsequent sermon addresses specifically a situation of persecution and enmity (6:27–35).

While earlier scholarship debated the genre of the beatitudes,⁵⁴ most today would identify it as prophetic-apocalyptic rather than wisdom discourse. As mentioned earlier, Jewish wisdom literature abounds with *makarisms* and woes though it is common in the prophetic literature as well. In wisdom literature, the emphasis is largely on this-worldly aspect of life and directs the hearers to adopt a certain conduct or strive toward virtue.⁵⁵ Also, the “if-then” formula often confers a reward to those who heed wisdom’s call to obedience and virtue [and Law] (e.g. Ps 1:1–3; Prov 8:34–36; Tob 13:12–14). Thus it has ethical and pedagogical functions and promoted communal and societal stability.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the prophetic-apocalyptic genre is declarative and eschatological in nature. Thus, it engenders hope/doom and generally occurs in a context of oppression/persecution.⁵⁷ Even if there has been some doubt regarding the genre of Matthew’s beatitudes,⁵⁸ it seems that Luke’s

51 Croatto’s suggestions that Luke used Isa 65:13–16 for first three beatitudes and 66:5 for the fourth is unique and intriguing that merits further investigation. See J. Severino Croatto, “El origen isaino de las bienaventuranzas de Lucas. Estudio exegético de Is 65:11–16,” *Revista Bíblica* 1 (1997): 1–16. He is one of the few Latin American scholars who attempts to combine rigorous historical-critical studies and liberation perspective.

52 Here I follow Bovon, *Luke* 1, 218–219.

53 Christopher F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPINTC. London: SCM, 1990), 330; Neyrey, “Loss of Wealth,” 92.

54 See especially the discussion in Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes,” 415–434.

55 A. E. Harvey, *Strenuous Commands of Jesus. The Ethic of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 46–76.

56 Harvey, *Strenuous Commands*, 46–76.

57 Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes,” 415–418.

58 See the discussion in Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes,” 415–434.

version is more prophetic-eschatological than wisdom in nature, though it is followed by a section of sapiential instruction (6:27–49). As Hans Dieter Betz has noted, however, the conditional clauses (ὅταν; when) in the fourth *makarism* may also imply a challenge to the disciples to carry out the called-for action.⁵⁹ Jesus is proclaiming or pronouncing a divine congratulation/shame to his audience based on their respective status vis-à-vis his declaration. Before it is possible to define more clearly who the recipients of the blessings and woes are, it is necessary to look at each beatitude/woe separately.

At the outset, it is possible to distinguish three scholarly directions regarding the beatitudes and woes, each of which is linked to the nature and identity of πτωχοί (poor/beggar) in 6:20. The first option views πτωχοί (poor) as primarily religious and/or ethical category,⁶⁰ whereas the second emphasizes almost exclusively a material-economic dimension.⁶¹ The third option sees a sort of combination of the two, in which socio-economic and religious categories are intertwined.⁶² The categories here are not hard and fast but rather elicit the dimension of πτωχοί (poor) that each scholar emphasizes the most.

It is noteworthy that there are two factors that influence most scholars' hermeneutical choices. That is, whether the beatitudes/woes are interpreted *primarily* in light of Isaiah 61:1–2 (or HB/LXX parallel) or with a view to Luke's narrative world. The second determinative factor is the place of Luke 6:20–26, either in part or whole, in the tradition-historical continuum. That is, whether the scholar is *primarily* interested in the meaning of the text within setting of pre-Lucan tradition or within the final form of Luke's gospel.

59 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 571–572. However, the beatitudes should not be constructed as entry requirements as some of the older scholarship did. For the older view see, Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922), 177–183.

60 E.g. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (Rev. ed. Macon, Georgia: Smyth and Helvyn, 2012), Kindle loc. 1096–1210; Hans Kvalbein, "Jesus and the poor," *Themelios* 12 (1987): 80–87; David L. Tiede, "Luke 6:17–26: Things Are Not as They Seem," *Int.* 40 (1986): 63–68; David P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Studien Zum Neuen Testament Und Seiner Umwelt (SNTU). Linz: Fuchs, 1982), 85–93; Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 179–180; less starkly also Thomas E. Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 106–115; Bock, *Luke Vol. 1*, 571–582; Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 243–257.

61 E.g. Bovon, *Luke 1*, 221–229; Topel, *Children of Compassionate*, 97–113; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 573–585; Krüger, "La proclama de una inversion"; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 106; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* 631.

62 E.g. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT. Kindle Edition; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 263–268; Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 279–290.

Who are then pronounced blessed⁶³ and who is pitied, according to Luke, and why? Many have noted the basic difference in Greek literature concerning *πτωχός* (poor as beggar) and *πένης* (relatively poor), where the former refers to destitute and the latter to those who are poor but above subsistence level.⁶⁴ This basic word analysis is not particularly helpful, since Luke and many other early Christian writers do not use this distinction,⁶⁵ and the word *πτωχός* (poor) is used in both a literal and metaphorical sense in the New Testament depending on the context.⁶⁶ Though the corresponding Hebrew words of *πτωχός* (esp. *עָנִי*, *עֲנָוָה*, *עָנָה* cf. also *עָנָה*) in HB nearly always carry a socio-economic meaning according to most recent research,⁶⁷ the situation is not quite as clear during the Second Temple period. Many scholars who have read *πτωχός* (poor) in light of Isaiah 61:1–2 LXX and the Second Temple literature have noted the development in the meaning of *πτωχοί* (poor) and *עָנִי*, *עֲנָוָה*, *עָנָה* and related terminology as one approaches the Christian era. That is, what was formerly a socio-economical designation became primarily an ethical connotation of humble/pious or “one who trusts in YHWH.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, more recent scholarship disputes this kind of simple linear development and insists on the socio-economic connotation of *πτωχός* (poor).⁶⁹ At the very least, one can conclude that the earlier idea that *πτωχός* (poor) nearly always equals

63 The exact meaning and translation of Gk. *μακάριοι* and *οὐαί* is debated. Neyrey (“Loss of Wealth,” 86–102) sees it in light of honor/shame values of the ancient Mediterranean and thus translates “how honorable” and “how shameful.” Other scholars prefer more generic blessing/congratulation (Bezt, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 571–589).

64 See F. Hauck, “*πτωχός*,” *TDNT* 6 (1964): 886–887; Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus Movement. A Social History of Its First Century* (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 76–77.

65 For example, the only mention of *πένης* in the New Testament is found in 2 Cor 9:9 where Paul quotes Ps 111:9 LXX. Also, at least some writers of the second temple period failed to see a distinction of *πτωχός* and *πένης* (e.g. Sir 13:18–23; T. Iss. 7:5; Jos. Asen. 10:11; T. Job 10:7; 12:1; 15:5; 32:7; 44:4; Ps.-Phoc. 22). See John S. Roth, *Blind, the Lame and the Poor: Study of Character Types in Luke-Acts* (JSNT Supplement Series; Sheffield: Continuum International Publishing, 1997), 130, 139.

66 Literal sense is most clearly used in Luke 16:20, 22, Gal 2:10, and Rev 13:16, whereas the same word is used with an ethical connotation in Rev 3:17.

67 D. Pleins, “poor, poverty,” *ABD* 5 (1992): 402–414; Topel, *Children of Compassionate*, 263–266. Pleins discusses the few exceptions in Psalms, Num 12:3, and Zeph 2:3 where *עָנִי*, *עֲנָוָה*, *עָנָה* may have a connotation of humility. He also notes that the LXX renders *עָנָה* as *πρᾶϋς* nine out of twenty four times and *עָנִי* as *πρᾶϋς* only four times thus generally preferring to use *πτωχός*. pp. 411–412.

68 For this view, see especially Bammel, *TDNT* 6 (1964): 888–902. This approach in perhaps most clearly followed by Talbert, *Reading Luke*.

69 Roth, *Blind, the Lame*, 112–141. See also, Topel, *Children of the Compassionate* 71–86.

pious/humble is an exaggeration.⁷⁰ Thus, it is probably better to discard the linear development model. Whatever might be the outcome of an exact word study, it seems that Luke's audience probably would have paid more attention to the narrative context of the gospel than linguistic background, however that is understood. Nevertheless, LXX connotations and meaning of the words in the general socio-linguistic context is not wholly irrelevant. Yet, in the context of Luke's gospel, the primary hermeneutical key is to look at the word in each passage separately and within Luke-Acts as a whole.

Charles Talbert represents scholars who think that *πτωχοί* (poor) has primarily a religious and ethical connotation.⁷¹ He derives the meaning of the first beatitude from the second. Though he acknowledges the parallelism in 6:20–26, his interpretation is based on the connection between poor and meek in Isa 29:18–19; 61:1 and in other Second Temple literature (4QPPS37 1:8; 1QH 5:13; Pss. Sol. 10:7). Further, he interprets *πτωχοί* (poor) in light of parallelism of rich with “proud and mighty” (*ὑπερήφανος, δυνάστης*) in the *Magnificat* (1:51–53).⁷² He also states that “the gospel canonizes no sociological state (cf. Lev 19:15; Sir 35:15–17).”⁷³ Finally, he interprets the following beatitudes as directed to the spiritually hungry, and to those who weep due to their spiritual condition (Ps 132:15, 146:7; Isa 55:1–2, Amos 8:11; Sir 24:21).⁷⁴

Still, Talbert's view contains weaknesses, not least because it relies on the older paradigm for the definition of *πτωχοί* (poor) as mainly a religious category. In 6:20, *πτωχοί* (poor) is first and foremost found in antithetical parallelism with *πλουσίοι* (6:24). As Topel has noted, there are no instances in LXX where *πλουσίος* (rich) would refer to “spiritually rich” people.⁷⁵ Further, elsewhere in Luke's gospel, *πτωχός* (poor) seems to refer primarily to economically poor (7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3; also possibly 4:18) and is often

70 Thus, here I see that Roth's *Blind, the Lame* and Topel's *Children of the Compassionate* studies are closer to a correct alternative regarding the New Testament and Plein's (“poor, poverty”) in regards to Hebrew words.

71 It is notable that Seccombe (*Possessions and the Poor*, 85–93) and Kvalbein (“Jesus and the Poor,” 80–87) employ similar arguments to that of the Talbert, though they conclude that *οἱ πτωχοί* refers to Israel in need of salvation.

72 Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 1151; for LXX connotations and meaning of the words in 1:51–52, see Warren Carter, “Singing in the Reign: Performing Luke's Songs and Negotiating the Roman Empire (Luke 1–2),” in *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Brawley* (eds. D. Rhoads et al.; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 32–33.

73 Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 1132–1151.

74 Ibid., 1165.

75 Topel, *Children of the Compassionate*, 115.

contrasted with the rich (14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8)⁷⁶ and/or placed alongside other socio-marginalized groups (4:18; 14:13, 21; 21:3).⁷⁷ Though the poor are juxtaposed with other socio-marginalized groups, such as τυφλοί, χωλοί, λεπροί, ἀναπειροί, κωφοί (blind, lame, leper, crippled, deaf; 7:22; 14:13), at times it is a separate category from them, as is seen here in 6:20. Further, the key terms οἱ πεινῶντες (the hungry) and οἱ κλαίοντες (who weep) are to be seen as further definitions or amplifications of the πτωχοί (poor) rather than vice versa. In HB and second temple Judaism poverty and hunger were often linked together (Isa 32:6–7; 58:6–10; 66:13–15; Job 24:4–11; Ps 22:26; 132:15; Prov 25:21; Tob 4:7, 16; Sir 4:1–2; Test. Jos. 1:5). Philo considered hunger and thirst as the worst forms of lack (*Spec.* 2.201).⁷⁸ Also in Luke (apart from 6:21, 25), the verb always refers to physical hunger (4:2; 6:3) with 1:53 being open to more metaphorical connotations. The temporal νῦν (now) in Luke also heightens the present aspect of hunger even if the promised χορτασθήσεθε (will be filled) points to the future (cf. 9:17).

Luke's use of κλαίοντες (who mourn) is notable since Matt 5:4 (πενθοῦντες) and Isa 61:2–3 LXX (πενθοῦντας/πενθοῦσιν) employ a different verb.⁷⁹ κλαίω (to mourn) is more general than πενθέω (mourn) and includes screaming.⁸⁰ In HB mourning refers to Hezekiah's cry over his own fate (2 Kgs 20:3; Isa 38:3)⁸¹ though mourning is particularly connected to the experience of Exile (e.g., Ps 136:1 LXX). Correspondingly, joy characterized people's return from Exile (Jer 31:7–14).⁸² In the New Testament, κλαίω (to mourn) occurs forty times and includes a number of connotations. Often it is associated with mourning due to death (John 11:31–33; 20:11), sorrow for sin (Jam 4:9; 5:1) or generic crying/sadness (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 7:30; Rev 5:4–5); Luke's usage reflects this variety.⁸³ In Luke 6:21, it probably has the connotation of weeping and its outward emotional expression due to the condition of poverty, hunger, and exclusion. The promise of future joy (will laugh; γελασέτε) connotes the opposite expression and may contain a hint of triumph over one's enemies.⁸⁴

76 Here I think Krüger in "La proclama de una inversion" overstates his case.

77 This is completely ignored by Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 84–93.

78 Topel, *Children of the Compassionate*, 97–98; L. Goppelt, "πεινάω (λιμός)," *TDNT* 6:14.

79 It is interesting to wonder why Luke would have changed the verb had he been dependent solely on Isa 61:1–2.

80 Bovon, *Luke* 1, 226.

81 K. Rengstrof, "κλαίω, κλαυθμός." *TDNT* 3:723.

82 Bovon, *Luke* 1, 226.

83 Mourning over death (7:13, 32; 8:52; 23:28; Acts 9:39; 21:13); mourning over sin (7:38; 22:62); mourning destruction of Jerusalem (19:41; 23:28).

84 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 256.

The last beatitude is similar to the first in that both are in the present tense (6:20, 6:22–23; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 68–69). There are also considerable differences in wording between Luke and Matthew. Betz suggests that there is a 3+1 numerical symbolism between four beatitudes and the four threats in the last *makarism*.⁸⁵ While this seems uncertain, the basic structure of two temporal clauses introduced by ὅταν (“when,” “whenever”) with four specific forms of oppression, are closer to the mark.⁸⁶ The motif of persecuted prophets of the Hebrew Bible seems to be dominant (cf. 13:34–35) and this persecution takes the form of hatred, exclusion, and reviling or shaming. The subject of persecution is a generic οἱ ἄνθρωποι (human beings) and the reason for exclusion is “on account of the Son of Man.” Hatred (μισέω) is directed toward the second person ὑμᾶς (you) and finds counterparts in HB as the godless hate the godly (Gen 37:12–18; Ps 18:17; 21:8; 25:19; 105:24–25; 1 Kg 22:8; Isa 66:5).⁸⁷ In Luke, hatred is most often found in connection with enemies of disciples or people of God (1:71; 6:27; 21:17; cf. 14:26; 19:14). It connotes more than feelings of anger and finds expression in concrete actions as spelled out in the three following verbs.

1) ἀφορίσωσιν (they will exclude) may refer to social ostracism in general or more specifically to religious excommunication.⁸⁸ In HB its counterpart refers primarily to cultic separation (Ezek 6:21; Isa 66:5).⁸⁹ In the New Testament, the verb is used to make a distinction between two groups (Matt 13:49; 25:32; Acts 19:9; 2 Cor 6:17), or more positively, separating someone (e.g. Paul/missionaries) for a specific purpose (Acts 13:2; Rom 1:1; 1:15). Since the hypothesis of formal excommunication from the synagogue has been largely abandoned (cf. John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2),⁹⁰ it seems that more generic social ostracism here is meant. 2) ὀνειδίσωσιν (they will revile) is a more concrete shaming as a result of exclusion and ostracism. If Jesus’ passion narrative (Matt 27:44; Mark 15:32) and early Christian experience (Rom 15:3; 1 Pet 4:14; Heb 10:33; 13:13) are used as examples, the shaming and reviling were common experiences. 3) ἐκβάλωσιν (they will defame or throw out), fits awkwardly into the context and is a difficult expression⁹¹ but is closely related to the overall experience of persecution and exclusion.

85 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 578.

86 Ibid., 578–579.

87 Here Isa 66:5 LXX has considerably different wording and meaning from MT.

88 See, for example, Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 579–580; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 227.

89 Topel, *Children of Compassionate*, 105.

90 See, for example, Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, Jews, and Jewishness* (Diss. Helsinki: Tyylipaino, 2003), 49–94.

91 See Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 580–581; Topel, *Children of Compassionate*, 106–107.

The following command χαρήτε (rejoice) and σκιρτήσατε (leap for joy) are expressions of joy, similar to those found in HB. Israelites are to rejoice in God's salvation and particularly as expressed in the return from Exile (Ps 5:11; 9:2; 40:16; Isa 35:10; 51:11; 65:18). Response to God's salvation and activity of Jesus are important themes in Luke (1:14, 28; 10:20; 13:17; 15:32; 19:6, 37; Acts 5:41; 8:39; 11:23; 13:48; 15:23, 31). Finally, those who are persecuted experience joy ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ (in that day). This expression probably refers to the current experience rather than an eschatological reward per se. The reward that the disciples receive in heaven (ἐν οὐρανῷ) probably does not exclusively point to the afterlife. It includes a reference to the joy in the midst of persecution, however, which is a reward that is with God (cf. 12:34) and thus is indestructible both here and now and in the afterlife.

The antithetical series of woes (οὐαί) start with the conjunction πλὴν (but) that highlights the contrast between woes and the preceding beatitudes. Woes are opposites of the beatitudes and convey the idea of lament and solemn warning/threat to the group that stands under judgment. As mentioned earlier, woes are found in both HB and second temple literature with some frequency (e.g. Isa 5:8–22; 1 En. 98–99). In Luke, woes are declared on unrepentant cities (10:13), those who oppose Jesus (11:42–52) or cause disciples to stumble (17:1), and Jesus' betrayers (22:22).

The first contrast is that of πλουσίοι (rich) to the previous πτωχοί (poor) and seems to indicate the economically wealthy and by implication the powerful.⁹² In LXX the word occurs sixty-seven times and always refers to the economically rich. The idea of "spiritually rich" does not exist in LXX.⁹³ Luke uses the word πλούσιος (rich) exclusively to refer to economically well-off and often contrasts πλουσίοι (rich) to πτωχοί (poor, e.g., 16:1, 9, 21–22; 21:1–2).⁹⁴ According to 6:24, the rich have already received (ἀπέχετε)⁹⁵ their consolation (παράκλησιν; cf. 2:25). The following woes describe further the conditions of the rich. That is, they are the ones who are full (οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι)⁹⁶ and therefore will find themselves hungry; they laugh arrogantly now and therefore will weep; they enjoy

92 Seccombe (*Possessions and the Poor*, 91) interprets the rich, full, and laughing as those who "have no longing for salvation".

93 Topel, *Children of Compassionate*, 115–116.

94 The cognates of πλουτέω occur once in Luke 1:53 in parallel with πεινῶντας and πλούτος once in Luke 8:14 where it is one of the things, along with cares and pleasures of life that chokes spiritual life.

95 ἀπέχω is a word of commerce and has the nuance of cashing of payment.

96 ἐμπίπλημι is a rare word in the NT that occurs only five times (John 6:12; Rom 15:24). In Luke-Acts it is always connected with food, hunger, and/or physical provision (1:53; 6:25; Acts 14:17).

good reputation and flattery of people, but that is their only reward. There is a sense of eschatological inevitability that is presented to those who are rich, arrogant, filled, and powerful.

It is important to note that the first and last groups of the beatitudes (poor and persecuted) are promised a reward in the present tense, whereas the hungry and weeping with the future tense. Similarly, the first and last woes are presented in the past tense, whereas the second and third are in the future. Thus, the present and eschatological aspects of Jesus' proclamation are juxtaposed in a way that retains a level of ambiguity characteristic of the arrival of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry.

Who then is the audience of the beatitudes and woes, or to whom are they addressed? This question can be answered on various levels. At the literary level, scholars disagree whether the addressees are disciples, the crowd, or both. According to 6:17–19, a great crowd and group of disciples are clearly present, but Luke seems to have Jesus addressing the disciples specifically ("he looked up at his disciples," 6:20). The crowd would then be addressed more directly in 6:27 ("I say to you that listen"). If a contrasting dichotomy between disciples and crowd is maintained,⁹⁷ however, one needs to ask why the woes are addressed to the disciples, especially using the emphatic second person pronoun? Thus, it seems best to allow a degree of ambiguity in terms of audience. Disciples are specifically addressed in Luke 6:20–26, but the crowd in the background is given both an invitation and warning as to the two ways.⁹⁸ The woes would also be directed specifically to Luke's later audience that included rich and powerful members (see below).

How would the Lucan audience have heard and responded to the message of beatitudes and woes? Would they have heard a blanket condemnation of the rich/powerful and the exclusive blessing of the poor/marginalized, or would they perhaps spiritualize the idea of poverty? Did Luke want to address specific issues in the audience and, if so, what would have they been?

Despite the antithetical parallelism between beatitudes and woes, it is doubtful that they were intended or heard in exclusively economic categories, or that the poor/rich, hungry/full, and so on could be labeled as the general plight of humanity.⁹⁹ In that sense, while the first three beatitudes speak of

97 For this view, see Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 69–72.

98 For similar distinction of the audience, see P. S. Minear, "Jesus' Audiences, according to Luke," in *The Composition of Luke's Gospel: Selected Studies from "Novum Testamentum"* (ed. D. Orton; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 62–68.

99 In reference to beatitudes in Q, for example, see Kloppenborg, "Blessing and Marginality," 36–56. This interpretation depends on separating the first three beatitudes from the fourth.

material¹⁰⁰ conditions (or lack thereof), the final beatitude adds the dimension of social and religious marginalization. The disciples were πτωχοί (poor) due to having left everything to follow Jesus (e.g., 5:1–11) and were probably looked upon with suspicion for doing so. Yet, there is a clearly Christian flavor to the beatitudes, even though the disciples had probably experienced a certain level of ostracism for being attached to such a controversial charismatic figure during Jesus' earthly ministry.

Jesus's disciples certainly were poor and probably hungry as well at times (cf. 6:1–5). They lived an itinerant life-style and were totally dependent on people's generosity for their basic needs (Mark 1:16–20; 10:25; Luke 9:57–62/Matt 8:19–22; Luke 14:22/Matt 10:37).¹⁰¹ Scholars contest the situation of the peasants and artisans in first-century Galilee, but it was likely characterized by a general struggle over livelihood.¹⁰² Abuse of the patronage system, burdensome taxes and tributes, and constant threat of political violence were undoubtedly contributing factors.¹⁰³ In case of loss of harvest due to drought or pestilence, the resulting famine made survival even more difficult.¹⁰⁴ When life became intolerable, some resorted to banditry, and those who did not sometimes suffered from the resulting violence, either at the hands of the political leaders or the bandits.¹⁰⁵ Ethnic violence between Samaritans and Judeans during the first century is also well known (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.6.1–3). In the context of Q, the beatitudes and woes were probably directed to early Christians or missionaries who had experienced loss and poverty due to

100 Strictly speaking, weeping is not a material condition but rather a psychological state. Since here, however, it is intricately connected and dependent on the two previous beatitudes, I included it in the same group.

101 John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 3. Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 41–74; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 197–203.

102 See further discussion on pp. 196–199.

103 Douglas O. Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants: The Bible in the Mediterranean Context* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2008), 11–39; Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs. Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity International Press, 1985), 48–134; Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Society: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 148–159; Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 241–268.

104 Gildas Hamel, “Poverty and Charity,” in *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (ed. C. Hezser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 308–324.

105 Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs*, 49–134; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 170–186.

persecution and ostracism from their families and communities.¹⁰⁶ It thus functioned as a word of comfort and doom respectively.

In the context of Luke's audience, the situation was probably not much better for many people. While it is impossible to know exactly which urban enclave of the eastern Mediterranean Luke is addressing,¹⁰⁷ some general ideas of socio-economic stratification in the Roman Empire and life in the urban centers may be highlighted.

It is common to divide the Roman Empire into two general categories; that is, the elite and the non-elite.¹⁰⁸ Many scholars further divide these two into sections using Lenski's social stratification theory of advanced agrarian societies.¹⁰⁹ While social status is important, it does not necessarily correspond to economic realities, though there is a general correlation between the two. For example, Trimalchio, a freed slave, became extremely wealthy through inheriting his master's property and conducting various business ventures. By virtue of his lowly background, however, he remained an object of disgust and ridicule by the elite, such as Juvenal.¹¹⁰ Something similar could be said of the wealthier tax collectors among the Jews (cf. *War* 2.287, 292; Luke 19:1–10). On the other hand, those who were otherwise eligible to the highest Roman orders, such as equestrians and senators, had to fulfill extravagant economic requirements.

According to the recent scholarship of Roman social history, however, one should talk about an economic continuum rather than a strict dichotomy between the small and wealthy elite and the poor masses.¹¹¹ According to

106 Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth," 87–102.

107 Possible suggestions for Luke's provenance include Ephesus (Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan theology* [SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 23); Antioch (Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 45–62; Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, xxxix) with the last probably better option. Ultimately it is very difficult to determine the exact provenance.

108 Géza Alföldy, *Social History of Rome* (rev. ed.; trans. D. Braund and F. Pollock; Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 94–156; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 53–95.

109 Gehard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 189–296; Esa J. Autero, "Social Status in Luke's Infancy Narrative: Zechariah the Priest," *BTB* 41 (2011): 36–45.

110 Richard MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 BC to AD 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 48–51, 103–127.

111 See especially Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 99 (2009): 61–91; Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne, eds. *Poverty in Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Walter Scheidel and Steven Friesen's calculations, the Roman Empire included various degrees of poverty and wealth as well as a middling income bracket. The latter would have ranged from around six to twelve percent of the population in the Empire though in cities this could have reached as high as twenty-five percent.¹¹² This meant in practice that the "middling bracket" earned an income of 2.4 to ten times the bare minimum and one to four times a "respectable" consumption level. Still, according to this view, the vast majority (about ninety percent) would have lived close to subsistence level and only a tiny fraction would have enjoyed supreme wealth.¹¹³

According to Friesen's poverty scale (PS) that includes seven categories (PS1–PS7) the highest three income levels comprised the economic elites (PS1–PS3) and the lowest three (PS5–PS7) lived on or below the subsistence level.¹¹⁴ It is the PS4 level, which Friesen labeled the "moderate surplus" group that is properly called the middling section. This PS4 group should not be mistaken with the modern middle class, however, since it lacks stable profile and common socio-economic interests.¹¹⁵ According to Friesen's scale,¹¹⁶

2006); Neville Morley, "The Poor in the City of Rome: The Politics of Roman Poverty," in *Poverty in Roman World* (eds. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21–39; Walter Scheidel, "Stratification, Deprivation, and Quality of Life," in *Poverty in Roman World* (ed. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–59; Anneliese Parkin, "'You do Him No Service': An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving," in *Poverty in Roman World* (eds. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60–82; Greg Woolf, "Writing Poverty in Rome," in *Poverty in Roman World* (eds. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83–99; Dominic Rathbone, "Poverty and Population in Roman Egypt," in *Poverty in Roman World* (eds. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 100–114; Steven J. Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 323–361. See also, Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor. Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010), 19–107. For the older dichotomous view, see especially Alföldy, *Social History of Rome*, 94–156.

112 Longenecker (*Remember the Poor* 52) puts the middling group of the cities to fifteen percent and doubts the drastic difference between cities and rural areas.

113 Scheidel and Friesen, "The Size of the Economy," 82–91.

114 Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 340–342.

115 Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 55.

116 Friesen ("poverty in Pauline Studies," 341) includes the following groups in each section of the scale: PS1 Imperial elites: imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freed persons; PS2 Regional elites: equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some *decurial* families, some freed persons, some retired military officers; PS3 Municipal elites: most *decurial* families, wealthy men and women

PS4 included many military veterans, some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, and some artisans who employed others. He put the number of PS4 to seven percent of the population and identified a number of individuals in Pauline congregations as possible PS4 persons.¹¹⁷ It seems that Friesen's PS4 percentage is a bit low and should be adjusted, at least in the cities, to comprise closer to ten to fifteen percent of the population.¹¹⁸

It is important to note that there are significant differences between the general social stratification (per Lenski and those who apply it) and economic scales discussed above. For example, PS2 includes equestrian families who are part of the top social elite (after senators) according to Lenski's stratification scale, but the grouping also has some wealthy retainers and freedpersons. All of these three groups occupy a different place in Lenski's stratification model.

Having said all this, the poverty scale is rather general and, with the exception of the basic difference between the cities and the countryside, does not take into consideration local variation.¹¹⁹ Also, as indicated earlier in reference to Trimalchio, money alone did not bring social prestige, a value that was vital in the ancient Mediterranean world and often exceeding wealth. Thus, taking into consideration its heuristic nature and relationship to social status factor, the economic poverty scale will be used with caution. Its main advantage is that it allows a nuanced scale that enables to be analytical in determining various income levels rather than resorting to overt dichotomy between the elite and non-elite.

Despite a significant middling group, cities were organized according to interests of the elites.¹²⁰ Many who were not part of the rich and powerful lived in the crowded, dirty, and disease infected parts of the ancient cities,

without an office, some freed persons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants; PS4 Moderate surplus persons; PS5 Stable near subsistence level: many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freed persons, some farm families; PS6 Subsistence level and often below it: small farm families, laborers, artisans especially those employed by others, wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners; PS 7 Below subsistence level: some farmers, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, persons with disabilities, unskilled day laborers, prisoners.

117 Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 341–358. Possible P4 (or P5) persons: Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), Gaius (Rom 16:23), Erastus (16:23), Philemon (Philm 4–22), Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2).

118 Here I come close to Longenecker's estimate (*Remember the Poor*, 52).

119 For an example of differences between the regions, see Rathbone ("Poverty and Population," 100–114) who argues for virtual absence of poverty in the Roman Egypt.

120 MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 57–87; Richard Rohrbaugh, "The Preindustrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 125–147.

which were located close to the city walls.¹²¹ They were the *humiliores* who were allowed to live in the city because they provided services for the elite.¹²² As Neville Morley has argued, urban poverty, especially in the city of Rome was often more severe than that in the countryside due to lack of direct subsistence. Many of the city dwellers had no other source of food than the market, theft, and charity. The most difficult situation fell on the newly arrived immigrants since they often lacked a network of social support.¹²³ Persecution and social exclusion of the newly formed Christian communities made this even more difficult, though they formed alternative families and networks of support (cf. 1 Thess 1:6–8; Phil 1:12–14, 28–30; 2 Cor 8–9; Acts 11:25–30). The poor were particularly vulnerable during famines, wars, and political instability, whether it was a matter of fact or just a rumor.¹²⁴ Here arises the question about the composition of Luke's audience. Did it include the poor or the wealthy, or perhaps a large segment from the middling group?

There is no scholarly consensus regarding the composition of Luke's community or audience. Some maintain that there was no Lucan community as such or that Luke wrote to a general audience.¹²⁵ Others, however, are more optimistic about identifying either a specific community or a more general audience.¹²⁶ It is true that locating an audience or community that is connected to a particular written document is hypothetical.¹²⁷ It is easy to

121 Rohrbaugh, "The Preindustrial City," 125–147.

122 Ibid.

123 Morley, "The Poor in the City," 27–39.

124 Morley, "The Poor in the City," 27–39; Hamel, "Poor, Poverty," 308–324.

125 Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written," in *Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 9–48; Stephen C. Barton, "Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences? For Whom Were the Gospels Written," in *Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. R. Bauckham. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 173–194.

126 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 77–120; Esler, *Community and the Gospel*; Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 162–165; Moxnes, "The Social Context of Luke's Community," 379–389; Vernon K. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. Neyrey. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 304–332; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 303–316; Karl A. Kuhn, *Luke the Elite Evangelist. Paul's Social Network* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2010), Kindle loc. 1226–1731. On locating the social location of Mark's audience, see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The Social Location of Markan Audience," in *The Social World of the New Testament* (eds. J. Neyrey and E. Steward, 2008), 142–162.

127 Robbins ("The Social Location of the Implied Author," 307) defines social location as "the common structural position occupied by a number of individuals in relation to a larger social whole."

succumb to overt allegorizing or assume that if the text reflects a certain context (e.g., urban), the author automatically adheres to all the values and concerns of that setting (e.g., vague “urban mentality”).¹²⁸ Despite this, it is possible to make deductions about a real audience by deciphering the narrative world. Many scholars emphasize the importance of the narrative world together with its implied author and implied reader (or implied audience) in this process.¹²⁹ Though the text only contains the narrative world, there is a link between the narrative world of the implied audience and the real world of the empirical audience. At the very least, the empirical audience must be able to relate to the intra-textual references.¹³⁰ Another important feature that may help locate Luke’s audience is to compare the narrative world with the social world of the time drawn from other texts and sources.¹³¹ Finally, hints of Luke’s audience can also be inferred from Luke’s redaction and the way he portrays various characters and their interactions. The purpose of sketching Luke’s audience here is not to give a detailed picture of it but rather to make general inferences on its socio-economic composition and dynamics.

There is a variety of scholarly opinions in reference to the composition of Luke’s audience.¹³² Some maintain that members of the highest strata of the upper class and the lowest strata; that is, the destitute, were missing.¹³³ Others opine that the whole spectrum of social classes is represented with the exception of the highest strata of the upper class.¹³⁴ Halvor Moxnes thinks that Luke’s community consisted only of non-elite members even if some might

128 Cf. Robbins, “The Social Location of the Implied Author,” 304–305.

129 Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke’s Community,” 379–389; Robbins, “The Social Location of the Implied Author,” 304–332; Andrew A. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angles. Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (New Testament Monographs, no. 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 8–11; John P. Heil *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 2–13. See the theoretical discussion in the chapter of methodology (esp. Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 121–141).

130 Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke’s Community,” 379–380.

131 Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke’s Community,” 379–380.

132 Many scholars before the 1990s prefer the term community over audience. Though the words can be used interchangeably to some extent, audience is preferred here.

133 E.g. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 304–312; Schotroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 87–120.

134 E.g. Esler, *Community and the Gospel*, 185–187; Robert Karris, “Poor and Rich: The Lukan *Sitz im Leben*,” in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. C. Talbert; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1978), 112–125.

have been better off than others.¹³⁵ Finally, Vernon Robbins locates Luke's implied author in the artisan class without trying to find the audience, implied or real.¹³⁶ One of the problems with these views is that many¹³⁷ tend to use general terminology (elite and non-elite, or rich and poor) without further definitions and nuancing.

I am inclined to think that Luke's audience included an economic spectrum from the PS5–6 to PS3. Some of PS3 members would have presumably also had relatively high social status and thus were not distinguished only by their relative wealth. However, it is less likely that members of PS1–2 or PS7 would have been present. There are several reasons for positing this kind of audience. The first section details four reasons for the upper level section and the second section three reasons for including the lower echelon in Luke's audience.

First, it seems that at least some early Christian communities included wealthy or prominent members, particularly in the Pauline congregations (1 Cor 1:26–29; Rom 16:1, 23; Phil 4:22).¹³⁸ Though it is debatable whether some of them came from PS4 or PS3 stratum, it is likely that at least some reached the middling bracket of PS4, possibly even higher.¹³⁹ While it does not follow that Luke's audience reflects similar composition, it does make it more plausible that they would be somewhat similar rather than complete opposites.¹⁴⁰

135 Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 162–165; Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke's Community,” 379–389.

136 Robbins, “The Social Location of the Implied Author,” 322–323.

137 Stegemann and Stegemann (*Jesus Movement*) is an exception to this. Though they retain a rather dichotomous understanding of economic stratification (elite and non-elite), they nevertheless take into consideration differing levels of social and economic existence.

138 For further discussion on the socio-economic status of, for example, *δυνατοί*, *εὐγενεῖς* (1 Cor 1:26–29); Erastus, Gaius (Rom 16:23); Phoebe (16:1); those from *familia Caesaris* (Phil 4:22); and others, see Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 235–258; Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 347–361; Stegemann and Stegemann (*Jesus Movement*, 291–316); Wayne A. Meeks, “The Social Level of Pauline Christianity,” in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (ed. D. Horrell. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 195–232. Stegemann and Stegemann conclude that “some rich members of the upper stratum outside *ordines* cannot be excluded, though they cannot be demonstrated with certainty” (*Jesus Movement*, 295); and that “some . . . perhaps belonged to the group of the rich of their city” (*Ibid.*, 296).

139 Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 347–361; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor* 235–258; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 291–316.

140 To this could also be added Pliny the Younger's statement to the Emperor Trajan in the early second century (*Ep.* 10.96.9; cf. 10.96.5). Particularly interesting is the section that insists that Christians of “every age and class” (*omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis*) was brought to trial. Pliny would hardly have made this statement had he not been concerned that

Second, even if Paul's congregation included only some middling income individuals, it seems that Luke's audience could be pushed further up slightly (to include some PS3 members). There are a few wealthy and prominent people in Luke's narrative that respond positively to Jesus or the apostles; many also fall into the middling category. In Luke, these include two centurions (7:1–10; 23:47); Joanna the wife of Chuza who was Herod Antipas' steward (ἐπίτροπος; cf. *War* 1.487). Jairus bears the title ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς (synagogue ruler; 8:40) and Zacchaeus is depicted as chief toll collector and wealthy (19:2; ἀρχιτελώνης . . . πλούσιος).¹⁴¹ Finally, Joseph of Arimathea is a member of the Sanhedrin (23:50; βουλευτής).¹⁴²

In Acts, the number of wealthy and prominent individuals is even greater. Some of the most important ones are the Ethiopian eunuch, who was δυνάστης Κανδάκης βασιλίσσης . . . ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς (“a court official of the Candace . . . on charge of her entire treasury”; 8:26–40). He was presumably the finance minister or chancellor of the queen of Ethiopia.¹⁴³ In Acts 10:1–48, Luke tells of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius (see also other prominent persons, in 17:4, 12, 34).¹⁴⁴ Sergius Paulus is described as a proconsul (ἀνθύπατος) of Cyprus (13:4–12) who received the Christian message.¹⁴⁵ He was undoubtedly quite a wealthy and prominent individual. Though Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann doubt that he actually became a full

at least some in the *ordines* or otherwise prominent people had converted or been sympathetic to the Christian faith (contra Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 309–310). Given the attitude of the elite in general, had Pliny thought that this new “superstition” was strictly a movement of the common people, it probably would have been less of a concern to him.

141 Stegemann and Stegemann (*Jesus Movement*, 314–316) consider Zacchaeus as a wealthy retainer and states that he is an example of “the presence of retainers from the upper stratum” (316) in the post-70 Christ confessing communities.

142 To this could still be added few parables where a key character is depicted as of some means and conducts positive or exemplary action (Luke 10:25–37; 15:11–32).

143 See further comments on the Ethiopian, Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity. The World of the Acts of Apostles* (Trans. McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), Kindle loc. 406–452.

144 See further, Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, Kindle loc. 504–527. Given the centrality and space given to narrating Cornelius' exemplary character, piety, and conversion, he is probably to be seen as a model person; he perhaps reflects a major contour of Luke's audience. This is not to say that Luke's audience included many or even any centurions per se.

145 Ibid., Kindle loc. 810–831.

member of the Christian community, it is a moot point here,¹⁴⁶ because he is portrayed as receiving the Christian message. Finally, there are others who are either sympathetic or friendly to the apostles and the Christian message (e.g., 19:31, 35–41; 28:7–10). There is no need to make a detailed evaluation of every individual. If Luke “upgraded” or rhetorically exaggerated the socio-economic standing of some of the above-mentioned individuals, it probably would have served the purpose of communicating the Christian message to the people of wealth and prominent status in his audience.

Third, Luke’s literary style and rhetoric indicate that he was an able writer and was familiar with the literary conventions of the Greco-Roman society.¹⁴⁷ Even if a patron finances his literary achievement, it still presupposes a high level of literacy on the part of the author. Such services generally were available only for those who came from higher echelons of the society.¹⁴⁸ Further, it is unlikely that Luke would have written Luke-Acts to an audience where nobody would have appreciated his literary achievement, save himself.¹⁴⁹ It is also likely that the esteemed (κράτιστε) Theophilus (1:3; cf. Acts 24:3; 26:25) was a real person. Even if he was a fictive personality, he most likely stood symbolically for Luke’s audience.

Fourth, Luke’s gospel contains special material that targets the better off (PS4–2) and attempts to persuade them to share their possessions with the poor (PS5–7), even if the call is not often heeded. For example, some of the parables such as the Rich Fool (12:12–21, 32–34), the Banquet Invitation (14:16–24), and the Dishonest Steward (16:1–9) depict this. Even the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus leaves open the fate of the five brothers (16:19–31), and Luke’s other specialty material reflects similar sentiments (14:12–14; 19:1–10). Though the *Magnificat* (1:46–56) and the beatitudes and woes (6:20–26) militate somewhat against this, the prophetic nature of these sayings allow the less nuanced critique of the rich. Finally, Luke’s redaction betrays certain aspects that reflect

146 Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 308–310. Their reasoning is that the duties of an urban magistrate, including holding of and participation in the sacrificial cult were “unimaginable for a believer in Christ” and that he is not depicted of having undergone a Christian baptism. There are other individuals, however, some with considerable prominence, whose baptism is not narrated (Acts 17:4). Most importantly, Luke is focusing on the power encounter between Paul and Bar-Jesus and not on the possible “social consequences” of the conversion. It is of course possible that Sergius Paulus remained more of a sympathizer than a convert proper.

147 Kuhn, *Luke the Elite Evangelist*, Kindle loc. 277–1221.

148 Ibid., 666–1221. Kuhn seems to overemphasize the literary skills of Luke at the expense of other fact as he places Luke among the wealthy elite of the Roman Empire.

149 Esler, *Community and the Gospel*, 184.

hints of his wealthy audience. For example, in the story of Jesus and the Rich Ruler, the latter remains in the scene instead of departing downcast as Mark's version indicates (Luke 18:23//Mark 10:22; similarly Matt 19:22).

Having said all this, it is important to note the potential difficulties that the wealthiest and most esteemed members of the Roman society would have experienced, if they considered Christian conversion. People such as Sergius Paulus and others who were quite wealthy (PS1–PS2) would have jeopardized their wealth and status and risked social ostracism, loss of their community, elite networks, and financial status.¹⁵⁰ Because these would have been severe hindrances to joining the community of believers, it is unlikely though not impossible that people from these groups would have openly joined the early Christian communities.

Some scholars have argued that Luke's audience would have lacked the poor or the lowest strata of the Roman Empire (PS6–7). Stegemann and Stegemann, for example, state that this group (πτωχοί; poor) was missing because the data in Luke-Acts lacks "representatives of the absolutely poor."¹⁵¹

Several arguments, however, support the notion that the audience included people from the PS5 and PS6 groups. First, as indicated earlier, many early Christian communities included individuals from various social categories. James and 1 John contain references to near destitute individuals (Jam 1:9–11, 27; 2:1–7, 14–17; 5:1–6; 1 John 3:16–17).¹⁵² Paul spent considerable energy to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem. His comments indicate that other congregations, such as the ones in Macedonia (2 Cor 8:2;¹⁵³ cf. Gal 2:10) and Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:26–27; cf. Acts 11:27–30; 24:17) included poor individuals as well (see also 1 Cor 1:26–29; 11:21–22).¹⁵⁴ This does not prove the existence of P5 and P6 members in Luke's audience, but it does make it more probable given the other arguments. It also indicates that the nascent Christian movement had gained converts from the lowest sections of the society.

¹⁵⁰ See further on Lk 14:12–14 in section 5.1.

¹⁵¹ Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 304.

¹⁵² In the case of 1 John, it is possible to think that the situation is exemplary and hypothetical. James, however, includes too many direct statements about the poor and poverty that it is difficult to bypass.

¹⁵³ Stegemann and Stegemann (*Jesus Movement*, 296) think that Paul's language in 2 Cor 8:1–3 reflects more his rhetorical aims than reality of poverty (cf. Phil 4:14–15; 2 Cor 11:9). Though Longenecker (*Remember the Poor*, 257–258) acknowledges the rhetorical force, he rightly points out that Paul does not distinguish between the churches of Macedonia (i.e., in Philippi and Thessalonica, of which the latter was probably a bit worse off economically).

¹⁵⁴ For details, see Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 235–258; Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 337–361.

Second, Luke includes numerous references to the poor and destitute individuals in his narrative. Some are explicitly called *πτωχοί* (poor) or are to be understood as such (6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 15:2–53; 11:3, 5–13; 16:19–31; 21:2). At other times, people are explicitly mentioned with a disability or other type of debilitating condition (4:31–37; 5:12–26; 6:6–11, 18–19; 7:11–17; 8:26–39, 43–48; 13:10–17; 18:35–43).¹⁵⁵ It is perhaps notable that both the woman with the blood flow (8:43–48) and the Gerasenes demoniac (8:26–39) are portrayed in the condition of poverty and marginalization due to their debilitating conditions. The woman had spent all her money on doctors and presumably was a woman of some means prior to her illness.¹⁵⁶ The man with demons lived in tombs outside the village community rather than in a house. In addition, many in Luke's narrative who are well-off either reject the message of salvation or remain in an ambivalent position; the poor, sick, and sinners often receive it with joy (1:47–56; 2:8–20; 4:38–41; 5:12–16, 17–26, 27–32; 7:22, 29; 8:26–39; 9:37–43; 13:10–17; 18:35–43). All this, of course, could be just rehashing of traditional material from Q or the Jesus tradition, but given the large portion of Luke's special material, it is noteworthy. Most notably, the situation of *πτωχοί* (poor) is directly addressed in 6:20 with the second person pronoun (cf. Matt 5:3–10). Also, the only person with a name in any of Jesus' parables is Lazarus the beggar (16:19–31). Similarly, in *Magnificat* (1:46–56) Mary, who clearly comes from low socio-economic status, is portrayed singing a hymn of praise in which she alternates between first person singular and third person addressees.¹⁵⁷

155 For the connection between social status, poverty, and illnesses, see John J. Pilch, "Healing in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of the New Testament* (eds. J. Neyrey and E. Steward; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 201–219. Sinners and tax collectors are not an identical category but do overlap (Schotroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 87–92, 105–106).

156 NA^{27/28} places the text *ἰατροῖς προσαναλώσασα ἔλον τὸν βίον* in square brackets. The textual variation across the manuscripts is rather even [the phrase is omitted e.g. in P⁷⁵, B, (D), (it^d), 0279, sy^s, sa, Or and included in e.g. $\aleph^2$, A, K, L, P, W, Γ , Δ , Θ , Ξ , f¹.¹³]. It is possible that it was a later scribal addition that was influenced by Mark 5:26. However, Metzger notes the skillful condensation of the text that may betray Luke's hand (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd ed.; Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994], 121). One marginalized Bolivian group with whom I read the passage noted an interesting detail about the passage. They pointed out that the woman must have been wealthy prior to her illness, since she had attended doctors and not *curaderos* (or folk healers). A poor person would have attended a folk healer whereas the wealthier would see a doctor.

157 On the socio-economic status of Mary and the references in the song, see Carter, "Singing in the Reign," 30–43; Richard A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas. The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 107–114.

Third, Luke's programmatic statement in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:17–19) also emphasizes the ministry that is directed to the poor, captive, blind, and the oppressed.¹⁵⁸ The socio-economic reversal theme (esp. 1:46–56; 6:20–26; 16:19–31; cf. 14:12–14), unique to Luke's gospel, would also ring rather hollow if there were no recipients in Luke's audience to concretely benefit by it. Finally, it is not quite accurate to state that there are no references to the poor in Acts, even if the word πτωχός (poor) is missing.¹⁵⁹ The apostles heal a number of sick and destitute persons (Acts 3:1–10; 5:12–16; 8:6–7; 9:32–43; 14:8–10; 16:16–24); the early community is characterized by the sharing of material possessions (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37) so that there would be no needy (ἐνδεής) among them; dispute over the care of widows is solved (Acts 6:1–6); and at least two collections for the poor in Jerusalem are mentioned (Acts 11:27–29; 24:17). Despite this, it is true that the topic of poor relief is not as prominent in Acts as in the gospel. Rather, the theme of possessions, its dangers and right use, becomes more central (Acts 1:18; 5:1–11; 8:14–24; 9:36; 10:2; 16:16–23; 19:23–41; 20:33–35; 24:26).¹⁶⁰

It seems, therefore, safe to posit that Luke's audience did include some who were living just above the subsistence level (PS5) and those who, at least occasionally, were in danger of falling below it (PS6). It is likely though that the PS7 (generally below subsistence) level was missing, since communal solidarity most likely lifted them at least to the PS6 level. As was indicated earlier, in the case of Acts and Paul the interconnectedness between communities went beyond immediate locality.

Given the arguments above, it seems that Luke's audience included individuals from both middling and lower levels of the wealthy (PS4–3) as well as from the differing levels of the poor (PS 5–6).

If there were such socio-economic differences present in Luke's audience as I maintain, the beatitudes and woes probably would have been heard as a challenging critique to the rich and as a word of hope for the poor. As many

158 Michael Prior, *Jesus the Liberator: Nazareth Liberation Theology* (Luke 4:16–30) (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1995), 149–176.

159 Stegemann and Stegemann (Jesus Movement, 304) insist that there is no evidence for the absolute poor in Acts (for them absolutely poor is defined as “at or under the level of minimum existence” [p. 71]). They minimize the significance of the widows (Acts 6:1–5; perhaps also 9:39, 41); the many healings (e.g. 3:1–10; 14:8–18; 28:9); and the collections to the poor in Jerusalem (11:27–29; 24:17). For a good overview of poverty in Acts, see Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 147–159.

160 The reason for the changed emphasis is probably due the shift from Jesus' earthly ministry in the gospel (cf. Luke 4:17–18) to the expansion of Christ confessing communities throughout the Roman Empire (cf. Acts 1:8).

scholars have pointed out, the lifestyle of the wealthy elite differed considerably from the rest of the people.¹⁶¹ Luke's special material indicates that social tensions between the wealthy/middling and the poor in the audience probably were present. As well, this probably included not only the uneven and exploitative patronage system but also the generally lavish and honor-bound lifestyle of the wealthy that would have dishonored the poor (cf. 1 Cor 1:26–29; 11:17–22).¹⁶² For example, Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) presents a man who lives in lavish luxury and neglects the beggar at his gate. The Rich Fool is portrayed as living a life of ease while retaining the surplus of grain exclusively for himself (12:16–21).¹⁶³ The subsequent speech of Jesus portrays the disciples anxious over their basic necessities of life (12:22–34). Luke is also the only evangelist who characterizes the Pharisees as φιλάργυροι (lovers of money; 16:14) and identifies them with the wealthy (14:1–24). He also instructs his audience to hold banquets for the poor and marginalized rather than their rich neighbors and relatives (14:12–14).¹⁶⁴

In light of this, Luke's beatitudes and woes contain a radical proclamation of reversal.¹⁶⁵ The poor, hungry, weeping, and persecuted are blessed, while the rich, the well fed, and those who laugh and enjoy good reputation find themselves under the shadow of divine judgment.¹⁶⁶ The second person pronoun and the declarative nature of the beatitudes give them strong rhetorical force. In fact, it is strange that πτωχοί (poor) are addressed at all. Beatitudes, especially in wisdom literature, are nearly always addressed to an audience that is of some means.¹⁶⁷ Those in Luke's audience who were poor, hungry, and persecuted would have found radical hope and joy as they were addressed

161 E.g. McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 57–87, 106–120; Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society* 109–123.

162 This idea is developed especially by Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 99–153.

163 Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 358–360.

164 Stegemann and Stegemann (Jesus Movement, 304) state that 14:12–14, 15–24 refers to the poor outside of the community. They are right in that the section is directed primarily to the wealthy. It seems that Luke is criticizing the wealthy, however, and trying to persuade them not just to focus on the poor non-Christians but also on those who are Christians.

165 Reversal of fortunes is one of the major themes in Luke's gospel (1:51–53; 6:20–26; 18:9–14, 18–30).

166 The value of honor was of utmost importance in the Roman Empire that to lose one's honor was worse than death. Thus, ill reputation or social ostracism were the worst forms of punishments for the elite.

167 E.g. Sir 26:1–13 is addressed to those who are able to give loans. See Harvey, *Strenuous Commands*, 71–75, 95.

directly as the primary beneficiaries of God's kingdom. At least in some sense, the kingdom is not just a distant hope but a present reality.

The proclamations would have challenged a number of values in the wealthier section of Luke's audience. Some of these would have been the primacy of honor, rank, wealth, the lifestyle of lavish banqueting, and the idea of αὐτάρκεια or self-sufficiency.¹⁶⁸ In addition to this, the Jewish notion of riches as a blessing of covenant faithfulness and virtue would have been turned on its head (e.g. Deut 28:1–45; Prov 10:2–4; 22:4; Sir 12:1–7, 29:8–13). Luke's perspective here is thus closer to 1 Enoch 92–105, which also questioned wealth as a sign of God's blessing (esp. 1 En. 93:7; 96:3–8; 103:5–15 cf. Deut 28:14, 44).¹⁶⁹ God's perspective of the poor and the presence of the kingdom in the here and now no doubt would have been celebrated by those on or below subsistence level (esp. ps6 and some ps5). Luke's middling and wealthy (ps4–3) audience would have found themselves under harsh prophetic critique, which would have been particularly penetrating had some assumed wealth as God's blessing. Further, in light of the elite attitudes that generally posited a superior moral standing to the wealthy, the saying would have been agonizing. While this critique of the wealthy and comfort of the poor would have been heard partially as a social critique, it seems that the main point would have been Luke's Christian audience.

Before further investigating the implications of the beatitudes/woes for Luke's audience, I will attempt to juxtapose the present-day reading of the Bolivian groups to the historical reading of the same passage.

3.3 Toward a Critical Dialogue—Reading Luke 6:20–26 Across Contexts

So far, I have kept the present-day reading of the Bolivian groups and my historical reconstruction of the beatitudes/woes separate. In this section, however, I attempt to find points of contact between the readings.¹⁷⁰ It is clear from the outset that the purpose and method that was employed by the Bolivian groups is radically different from mine and as a result led to different

168 For elite values, see McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 57–87, 106–120; Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society*, 109–123.

169 George W. Nickelsburg, "Riches, the Rich, and God's Judgment in 1 Enoch 92–105 and the Gospel according to Luke," *NTS* 25 (1979): 324–344. Luke does not, however, advocate destruction of the rich per se and portrays how wealthy individuals may be saved through proper use of material possessions.

170 I acknowledge that both readings are ultimately my interpretations even if I attempt to let the present-day Bolivian readers speak for themselves.

conclusions.¹⁷¹ My purpose in this dialogue is not to demonstrate the supremacy of either interpretations or methods but rather to discover whether these two perspectives might shed light on each other. The specific areas to which I will pay attention are 1) whether a historical reading and present-day interpretation can illuminate each other and potentially lead to new insights, and 2) how the purpose and method affect the interpretative results.

Contrary to enthusiasm on the part of some earlier Latin American scholars, popular reading is not always free from problems and does not always lead to new insights into the text, especially on the historical level.¹⁷² Regarding the Bolivian groups' reading of Luke 6:20–26, I was unable to find any specifically unique ideas related to the text, even if both had generally insightful comments.¹⁷³ This does not exclude the fact, however, that there might be ideas in the Bolivian groups' readings that could be beneficially incorporated into an historical interpretation of the text or project new perspectives in the appropriation process.

One of the striking aspects in the Bolivian groups' reading was the manner in which the social location affected the interpretative results. The experience of poverty/social marginalization and affluence directed the groups in their interpretative choices as they related to both the text and its appropriation. Thus, the idea is not far-fetched of social location of the historical author or audience as a possible factor that affects both the creation and the hearing of the text.¹⁷⁴ In practice, however, the polyphony of the voices within both Bolivian groups' readings also alerts one to avoid simplistic conclusions in this matter. Further, if Luke's audience consisted of members of both socio-economically affluent and marginalized members, as I hypothesized, it is likely that in addition to social tensions, these socio-economic differences also led to differing understandings of the text as it was read and heard. Thus, the

171 Though I speak of the purpose and method of the Bolivian groups, it is clear that I constructed the case study. Thus my method and my purpose are interwoven into the process. This includes the questions that were asked of both Bolivian groups, even if they chose to ignore certain questions, added others, or incorporated their distinct flavor throughout the case study.

172 E.g. de Wit, "It Should Be Burned," 39–60.

173 Unique or novel is obviously difficult to define, but here I mean something that is truly unique that has not been discovered by biblical scholars in the literature that was reviewed. On less rigorous criteria, new questions and perspective were brought forth by both groups' readings. The perspective of the ordinary readers is obviously interesting and important as such.

174 Biblical scholars have proposed this insight; moreover, the concreteness of the evidence during the empirical investigation lends some credibility to it.

blessedness of the “poor” in Luke 6:20 could have been understood in more than one way, regardless of what Luke (or Jesus) initially meant by it. Further, the insistence of understanding the beatitudes in exclusively material or religious/ethical terms seems to reflect Western insistence of clear definitions more than the integrated view of the ancient Jewish or Greco-Roman peoples. Bolivian groups’ readings also betrayed a great deal of ambiguity in this area. Anthropological studies¹⁷⁵ have noted this earlier but Bolivian groups’ reading lends some weight to this aspect as well.

The difference between the social location of Bolivian groups was perhaps most evident in the way each group applied the notion of retribution or what I called the action-consequence theology. As mentioned earlier, the pastor of the PG insisted that God will generally make a virtuous believer wealthy in response to faith and obedience. While the MG held a view that God rewards faith and obedience, the foundation for the idea was God’s justice; there were only few remarks of concrete material benefits as a reward. A biblical scholar might question whether the reward-based theology should be inferred as readily in beatitudes/woes,¹⁷⁶ even if beatitudes contained a sort of implied challenge as Betz mentioned.¹⁷⁷ As Ricoeur has indicated, however, texts create possible worlds of meaning and potential ways of orientation within themselves.¹⁷⁸ The meaning potential of the text when combined with new socio-historical and cultural context prompts readings that probably seem somewhat odd to many Western biblical scholars. Interestingly though, the interpretative method of both Bolivian groups was somewhat similar to the early Jewish and Christian methods of biblical interpretation where a key word or a phrase (cf. Rosa’s reference to the blessings of Deut 28) was taken out of textual framework and expounded in light of thematic parallels in other passages and in view of current realities within the community.¹⁷⁹

175 E.g. Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1981), 354–367. See also Neyrey, “Loss of Wealth,” 87–102.

176 Older scholarship tended to view the beatitudes as sort of entry requirements rather than eschatological declarations as the current scholarship maintains. See e.g. Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes,” 415–34. A concrete example of the more merit-based view can be found in Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 176–183.

177 Betz, *The Sermon on Mount*, 571–572.

178 Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 75–95.

179 For example on the biblical interpretation in Qumran community that bears some similarities, see e.g. Henning G. Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation. Vol. 1. From The Old Testament to Origen* (Trans. L. Perdue; Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2004), 27–33.

In addition, it seems that the Bolivian groups read the notion of blessedness and retribution in the beatitudes in light of wisdom genre; that is, if one conforms to God's wisdom (or commandments), then blessing and prosperity ensue. Both groups, however, included a prophetic aspect into their reading as well, which was particularly the case with the MG. The group adopted the prophetic clues from the text as they criticized the rich and saw themselves as the primary recipients of the kingdom. Though this aspect was less pronounced in the PG's reading, it did surface as spiritual criticism of who the true Christians were by the pastor and economically in José's comments on church as the social conscience of the society.

An interesting point of contact between scholarly interpretations and the Bolivian groups' reading is the notion of retribution (or action-consequence theology). Some Lucan scholars have noted in passing the common ancient idea that God (or gods) rewards virtue.¹⁸⁰ Though he ends up rejecting the hypothesis, Robert Karris has even hinted that it might be connected to the situation of Luke's community.¹⁸¹ To my knowledge, however, no scholar has specifically developed this notion or connected the social location of the author or audience to this idea. The idea of action-consequence or reward for virtue and obedience in HB and Jewish tradition was briefly mentioned in my historical reading. That is, Mosaic Law and wisdom literature specifically and concretely connect blessing and obedience to Law and curse/misfortune to disobedience (Deut 28:1–45; Prov 10:2–4, 13:18, 22:4; Ps 112:1–10). In the Second Temple Jewish literature, at least some authors made a similar connection that was sometimes based on the interpretation of the same biblical texts or applying similar principles of retribution (*Ant.* 1.13.1–4; 4.8.1–5; 8.2.1–2; 15.9.1–2; 20.2.4; *War* 7.11.4; *Life* 15; Philo *Praem.* 98–126, 127–151; *Sir* 7:31–35, 11:14–17, 12:1–7, 29:8–13, 31:8–11, 35:10–13). It is perhaps noteworthy that Josephus, Philo, and Ben Sirach all come from upper echelons of Jewish diaspora society and thus represent a social location that is similar or close to that of Theophilus in Luke. On the other hand, the author of 1 Enoch specifically criticizes the idea of connecting material prosperity and social honor (esp. 1 En. 96:4–98:8; 103:5–15) and declares woes to his wealthy and powerful opponents who appeal to wealth as a sign of God's favor using Deuteronomistic language (1 En. 96:4; 103:5; cf. Deut 28:13, 44). Despite this, 1 Enoch retains the idea of retribution, though mainly as an eschatological reality (1 En. 95:1–7; 96:3; 98:4–7). In light of this, it is not impossible to think that Luke was familiar with various views of retribution theology and consciously criticized a notion that connected material wealth

180 Topel, *Children of the Compassionate God*, 230–232; Tiede, "Luke 6:17–26," 63–68; Harvey, *Strenuous Commands*, 69–71.

181 Karris, "Poor and Rich," 112–125.

and God's favor too closely. The prominence of a reversal theme (1:51–53; 6:20–26; 16:19–31; 18:9–14, 18:18–30)¹⁸² and explicit criticism of connecting sin and misfortune (13:1–5) lend further weight to this hypothesis. In this sense, the prophetic declaration of God's favor on the poor, hungry, and persecuted seems subversive of the ideology of the rich and powerful members in Luke's audience. What would have made Luke's perspective stand out from 1 Enoch 92, 107 is the fact that the gospel was directed to a wealthy and high standing Theophilus. This idea of retribution and God's favor will be discussed in more details in chapter eight.

Regarding interpretative methods, it is perhaps not surprising that for both Bolivian groups the focus of the reading was their current everyday experience and reality. The historical context or literary patterns as such were not considered important or relevant. This was evident even when an isolated voice (José) made a separation between historical and present-day contexts with some frequency. Generally, there was a sense of immediacy and subjectivity that was directing the reading process. The text as such was not read in isolation of lived life, but rather it closely paralleled and was interwoven with it, even to the extent that it was sometimes difficult to separate the two. As such it is difficult to talk about an exegetical method but rather of an exegetico-hermeneutical approach, as indicated earlier. The resulting discourse mostly confirmed the existing beliefs and patterns, but at times it did seem to challenge them. This was evident particularly when the consensus of the group was questioned by differing opinions and an appeal was made to the text rather than an existing theological principle. The text was used as a source of moral and spiritual instruction but, especially in the MG, it prompted critique of the discrimination and marginalization that happens both in the church and society.

Salvation and the presence of the kingdom among the poor were seen in concrete material terms and as a source of hope, especially for the MG group. The PG group also owned the salvific aspects of the kingdom for themselves, though the perspective differed from the MG group's reading. Thus, both Bolivian groups used the text as an authoritative narrative that was fused with the existing tradition and the current situation of the groups. It functioned as a source of instruction, and occasionally as a source of inspiration, to improve life's conditions as well as provide a window to interpret and critique the present reality. Both groups also used the text to give support to their existing religious views, particularly to the action-consequence theology.

182 Luke also tones down considerably this worldly reward of the disciples compared to Mark's account (Mark 10:30//Luke 18:30).

Analysis of Ordinary and Scholarly Readings of Luke 12:22–34

This chapter follows the same format as the previous chapter in that the first section presents the readings of the Bolivian groups. This is followed by the historical reading of Luke 12:22–34 and the ensuing critical dialogue between the two sections.

4.1 Empirical Reading of Luke 12:22–34 by the Bolivian Pentecostal Groups

4.1.1 *Socio-Economically Marginalized Group's Reading of Luke 12:22–34*

4.1.1.1 Possessions and Social Status

Though nobody in the group seemed to be suffering from chronic lack of basic needs, a number of comments indicated that at least some had experienced times close to the subsistence level.

Pastor: We have always trusted in God... When I was [first] married with my spouse, eh, God has always sent a person or God has always provided with a raven¹ to provide us... [there was] one brother who cooperated with us economically and then left... and then my wife said to me now what do we do?² What was my response? God is going to provide us... don't worry... because with my wife we needed to give food to our children... and God provided.

Ruben: One time... when we were starting a work over there further away... quite far away... there was only one *micro*³ route that went there... we were there holding [church] meetings because we were just starting the [church] work... and the main road was quite far away. Getting there was not that difficult because we went with *micro*... the

1 This seems to be an allusion to the miraculous feeding of Elijah by the ravens (1 Kgs 17:4–6).

2 Here it is possible to see how a church is dependent on patrons for financial sustainability.

3 *Micros* are mini buses that are very common in Bolivia. Usually they seat about twenty or so people and provide cheap transportation in and around the cities, town, and villages.

thing was getting out and because we were there until a bit later . . . precisely that night . . . we were there later than we were supposed to and the *micro* was no longer going so we left back by foot. There were no street lights at that time . . . we walked for a long distance with the pastor to the main road . . . it was quite late . . . and the road was empty at that time . . . the pastor did not have much resources at that time . . . I remember that when we prayed on that road there [which] was empty at that moment . . . [and] when we finished praying there was transportation right there without us needing to stop it. It stopped and asked where we are going and we told him that we are going to Santa Cruz. "Get in I'm going there," [he said] and so . . . he brought us all the way to the round-about [in Santa Cruz] . . . and did not charge us anything.

Pastor: Eight new young disciples . . . stayed with me and they ate . . . and then I married her [wife] and the disciples who stayed with me . . . complained . . . and one of them came [and said] "Pastor, lend me three pesos" [three bolivianos],⁴ and then I said to my wife give it to him . . . she did not want to give—"Give it to him [I said], give," but she did not want to give. And I had to give it to him though she forcefully opposed it⁵ and I said to her God will provide us, God is going to give. There was in front of the house a small shop that sold bread . . . we had a bread delivery man who came to deliver bread there with his truck and he was my friend. And he comes and says, "Pastor." "Hello, my son, how are you?" He got back to his truck [and said], "For you pastor two bags of tortillas and empanadas." More than the three bolivianos for the bread because what she saved was for bread. She learned a lot from that.

These three examples above about God's provision do not only highlight the precarious socio-economic conditions of some group members, but they also demonstrate the practical outworking of their faith. It is not surprising that the group saw in this passage about worry an important encouragement to trust God for basic necessities (here food, transportation). The representative experiences or testimonies of the pastor and Ruben undoubtedly encouraged others to have faith in God's provision as well.

Despite these testimonies, however, discussion about worry of basic necessities was rather difficult for the group. Initially, they did not want to share

4 Three bolivianos is less than \$.05.

5 This section is difficult to render into English. The Spanish, "Y a la fuerza tuvo que darle," is literally, "and I had to give it to him by force."

their experiences, even though some affirmed worry over basic needs.⁶ Rather, some of the above stories were recounted later on as the group related stories about the importance of trusting God. The group's precarious socio-economic status was also reflected in their longing for upward mobility in the society. Consider the following conversation:

Pastora: May the desires of the flesh die ...

Daniel: Yes ...

Pastora: of the eyes ...

Daniel: Aha ...

Pastora: all of the vain glory ...

Daniel: Aja ...

Pastora: buying expensive clothes ...

Daniel: Uju ...

Juana: of the nobility ...

Pastora: of the high ... brand name ...

Juana: of the society ... [everybody laughs]

Pastora: make me go no lower ...

Pastor: I think what my wife [*pastora*] says; it was the problem we used to have and I decided to take off that mode [lit. "chip"] and put on another. Eh, if I believe that God gives me everything, eh, then I have decided, I Miguel Sanchez,⁷ to widen my territory. I believe in God and that He will place me into different environment.

6 The group was particularly asked whether they or people have any worries about basic necessities of life such as food and clothing. Pastor and few other group members answered affirmatively but nobody wanted to elaborate on what that entailed more specifically.

7 Name changed.

Pedro: Amen.

Pastor: Not only other people may wear nice clothes. I also, as a son of the King, am able to wear nice clothes and have things that they have.⁸ Of course, there are prerequisites, of course . . . and one of them is seeking the kingdom, right? I as a pastor in this church want to place this [mentality] into my church. We will not conform to what we have—

Pedro: Amen.

Pastor: —but move forward.

It is clear that *pastora's* comments, which others join, are somewhat sarcastic.⁹ They do not only criticize the wealth and lifestyle of the rich but also the mentality that Christians ought to be satisfied with their precarious socioeconomic situation. This probably reflects the older (or classical) Pentecostal mentality that had a more otherworldly outlook and often viewed possessions as “mundane” or sin.¹⁰ On the contrary, and as the pastor indicated, the group's new mentality assumes that believers are “the children of the King” and thus should expect abundant provisions from God.¹¹

The tension between the pastor's faith in the provision of material blessings and the group's concrete reality surfaced in a somewhat surprising way.

Pastor: [Speaking to me] If you were born over there up high [motioning with his hand up in the air] in status and I was born here [motions hand back down], right? Ah ya . . . can I . . . it's economic question . . .

Me: Yes, yes . . .

Pastor: Can I arrive there [motioning his hand up again]?

8 As the pastor told about this, he was wearing a dirty and worn-out T-shirt with holes in it and ragged old pants.

9 And perhaps also as a critique of the inequalities that the group sees around them.

10 Cf. Mansilla, “El pentecostalismo clásico y el neopentecostalismo,” 9–13; Chambe, “Forjando un paraíso,” 60–70.

11 This terminology reflects more the newer neo-Pentecostal type, particularly the idea of “sons of the king” terminology (cf. Mansilla, “El pentecostalismo clásico y el neopentecostalismo,” 9–13; Chambe, “Forjando un paraíso,” 60–70).

Me: Aha [hesitantly] . . .

Pastor: It will surely take a long time.

The pastor's reluctant question indicates his desire to reach the same socio-economic level as the researcher. Based on the comments made earlier that gave clues to the pastor's socio-economic status,¹² it is hardly surprising that one may sense discouragement in his statement. He desired to reach the same economic status as I had as a European but saw an insurmountable gap between his status and mine. Despite (or perhaps because of) these comments, some in the group seemed to be more cautious about the possibilities of upward social mobility.

Daniel: To look [at the birds and the flowers of the field] is like it says in Proverbs, "Look at the ant or a sloth,"¹³ right? Then so that we would learn how such an insignificant being [and] I am worth more than they . . . to say in this manner because all of a sudden I want this and I want that and I do not have it . . . it's like I am worried to be better all the time, I am forcing to have a better status when neither the flowers or the birds are doing this. They are secure in what they are going to have.

Daniel seemed to draw a comparison between the status seeking of people and the contentment of the natural world. Juana, on the other hand, saw no use of accumulating possessions because they would be worthless "in the presence of the Lord."

What it tries to say is that we are not to gather this . . . we are not to accumulate riches because what is it going to serve us when we are going to the presence of the Lord?¹⁴ We are not going to take everything that we have on this earth . . . we need to share with everybody.

Though neither of these statements was given as a direct response to the pastor's comment about the new mentality that he wanted to instill in the

12 Obviously, the socio-economic condition of the group was apparent to me from the observations, discussions, and questionnaires.

13 Observing an ant harks back to biblical wisdom tradition (Prov 6:6–8; 30:24–25) and sloth is a common animal in the eastern Bolivia that is found even within the many parks in the city of Santa Cruz.

14 The statement "the presence of the Lord" seems to mean "heaven" or life after death.

group, that is, about God's abundant provision, they seemed to stand in tension with it. It is also possible that Daniel and Juana found it less hopeful to climb the socio-economic ladder.

Despite the group's precarious socio-economic status, they emphasized the importance of giving. This became clear particularly as the group pondered the meaning of 12:32–34. Ruben pointed out the importance of not having fear when one gives—"Not to be afraid first. Do not be afraid, God says to you." Others pointed out the importance of sharing, though not everyone agreed how much one should give.

Ruben: To give up everything...sell your possessions and give to the poor...to give up or give it...

Rosa: To sow into the kingdom of God...that is, to give to the needy and with an attitude of not being afraid...

Juana: That we need to give up our things...

Daniel: There it is, to give up our things...but that is almost impossible but it is beautiful to say it.

The group seemed to promote total dispossession at first but after a while opted for a less radical stance. This perspective became pronounced, particularly when the group was asked about a more specific application of the text to their situation.

Pastor: [It is about] setting priorities...

Daniel: To put the Lord in the first place and then the family...put priorities...because God does not want...that one is not holding back...

Ruben: To give oneself over...

Daniel: Or how is it that this thing that I have is evil...he is not saying this...but that where my heart is because it is the essence; where my heart is like the Bible says, there is your treasure.

Pastora: Helping...I really do not practice this well, right? At the beginning a lot of people came here [to the soup kitchen]; lots of people that sometimes do not have [anything] and all that stuff, right? And

they come and they eat. Sometimes it makes me furious...sometimes it makes me furious because...I am a human being...I am flesh and bones, right? I have emotions and all. But I am learning to give, I look at them [laughs]...I look already, not like before, before I was angry and complained. But not anymore.

In addition to sharing, establishing priorities and giving oneself to the Lord seemed like the most important issues to the group. *Pastora* clearly confessed how she had struggled to share with those who came to the church's soup kitchen.¹⁵

The comments above indicate the precarious socio-economic condition of the group, even though there were people who were much worse off than they, as the comments about the soup kitchen indicated. Overall, some in the group struggled to make ends meet at least from time to time. Losing a wealthy patron¹⁶ of the church seemed to indicate a severe blow to the already precarious financial situation.¹⁷ Many in the group also had a desire for upward mobility, though it seemed more like a distant dream than a concrete reality to most. The group members practiced generosity and sharing even though their precarious socio-economic situation put severe limitations on it.

4.1.1.2 Salvation and Benefit

The group's reading emphasized having trust in God and his provision in life. God's goodness and love were the basis for this.

Daniel: In the kingdom there is love, there is faith, there is goodness [and] truth. There is humility and forgiveness; [that's] the kingdom of God. But seek first the kingdom of God, incredible, right? I have a Father who loves

15 One might be surprised that the *pastora* is upset about giving food from the church's food bank. The reason becomes more understandable, however, if one can imagine this church and the accompanying food bank as something like a small family food stall where each meal that is given out for free (or without profit) affects the income of the pastor's family who are struggling to survive as it is. Needless to say, the analogy is not completely literal but perhaps helps one understand the reasons for the *pastora*'s reaction.

16 Wealthy here is quite a relative term. From my observations, a wealthy patron of a church like this could mean a person who perhaps owned a modest car and lived in a somewhat stable economic situation. That is, a person who tithes (gives ten percent of their income) to the church with some frequency.

17 The situation that the pastor related here is likely to be a past occurrence but similar situations were related to me on other occasions. The situation was not unique.

me and knows my needs. So what should I worry about, because I have a Daddy who knows what I need . . . [He] gives me those things that I need.

Ruben: But the Bible says that we need to first seek the kingdom of God and His justice/righteousness;¹⁸ it says and everything that we need or all of the worries and problems; well . . . they are going to be resolved in its proper moment and time. And the thing that we need . . . He knows what we need.

The group also stated that trust in God's goodness is important. Faith that was demonstrated in actions was considered essential according to the group, because it proved the genuineness of one's commitment.

Daniel: So I need to believe . . . be convinced, be secure . . . that all things will be added . . . so I need to cling, it is an immovable credo, a credo . . . not for what I do or how holy I am but . . . because faith makes God move.

Juana: Yes.

Daniel: Or my faith makes God move because it pleases God. There is no other thing that is more beautiful than [when] my son feels secure with me . . . it would be stupid to think that He [God] is not going to give me everything that I need.

The group added to this a short reflection that perhaps also functioned as a sort of self-reflective criticism of their cultural values.

Daniel: We Latin people . . . we are very negligent in the sense of seeking. We always want that things are handed to us . . . but here it talks about action, it says seek . . . so it is not that everything is going to fall from heaven to me . . . I have my faith but it says that my faith has to be seen with action. Peter had to take a step of faith but if he stayed there he was not going to experience the supernatural work of God.¹⁹ So seeking is important . . . seek like a treasure.²⁰

18 Here is a clear example how the group freely mixed Matthew's and Luke's versions of the saying. The phrase "and His righteousness/justice" is only found in Matt 6:33 (cf. Luke 12:31).

19 Daniel is probably alluding here to Matt 14:28–33 where Peter stepped out of the boat to walk on water with Jesus.

20 Possibly an echo of the two parables in Matt 13:44–46.

Pastor: There is a saying . . . there is a saying in Santa Cruz [which says] “a dog that goes out to walk will find a bone to chew.”²¹

Pablo: A dog that goes out to walk finds a bone to chew clean . . . it takes action.

Pastora: Faith and action.

The tension between faith and action seemed rather dynamic here and the group saw no need to solve it philosophically. As a matter of fact, Rosa gave an example of the biblical prophets to illustrate this tension.

Elijah and Elisha, God first or God had first provided him through the birds to take, take food to him and also water. But also after that . . . he himself had to go seek. And he went to search for a widow to give him food.²²

The example from these prophets seemed to be saying that sometimes God provided miraculously whereas at other times one needed to seek and work hard for things to happen. There was no formula for such things, though faith for them would “move God” in some sense, as was commented above.

The action-consequence theology played an important part in the reading of the text and the group’s comments. Earlier (see above), the pastor indicated how God had provided bread and tortillas for his family through a man who owned a small delivery business. As he had shared his last three pesos with a needy brother, God rewarded him with provision that exceeded in value what he had given away. Similarly, according to Ruben, God had provided transportation from a remote location back to Santa Cruz as a response to faith and prayer.²³ Other group members also emphasized the importance of action and consequence, especially in the context of sharing and God’s corresponding reciprocating of financial resources.

21 Spanish *perro que sale a andar halla hueso que morder*.

22 This seems to be referring to the stories of Elijah (not Elisha) during the drought and famine in 1 Kgs 17:1–16. First God provided Elijah with food miraculously through the ravens (1 Kgs 17:1–7) and then commanded him to go Zarephath to receive food from a widow (1 Kgs 17:8–16).

23 The precise formula of action followed by consequence is somewhat less clear in this case, particularly since no explicit financial sacrifice was mentioned in the narrative with the exception that the pastor and the group members did not have many resources at the time.

Rosa: [Pablo] has an incredible faith... and he says to me, "One has to sow, one has to sow" ... to whomever it might be, [be it] in a drunkard, to whomever, it does not matter. The attitude is to sow into someone ... I say to him why are we going to sow into a person who is a drunkard if he is going to keep on drinking? Well, I think in this way, right? God knows how to utilize it for Him. The important part is that we are sowing and thanks to his [Pablo's] attitude and his faith, God has provided us with machines for his work. We also had some money and God also multiplied that money ... one has to talk, one has to talk and he did speak and then ... they called from Spain and sent us money from Spain to buy the machines. This is what pleases me that God is good and provides us, like He Himself says, "Try me."²⁴

Pablo: Then I called one of my brothers in Spain who is doing these jobs ... because he worked earlier with my father and he said let's see, send a photo [of the machine] ... so I sent the photo to him ... and then his mother called me, also from Spain and says to me. What are you doing? My wife is working in this artisan thing ... and do you have a place to live? I said, "No, we are still living with her grandfather" ... and then she says, "I am going to give a plot of land" ... they gave us a piece of land ... and they gave us a house worth about thirty-five thousand dollars. That is what God does ... and that is why I always sow into anyone's life. I always try to sow or that is the way she raised me. The *camba*²⁵ attitude is quite different from the *colla*,²⁶ because let's say *colla* is a bit stingy to give ... my pastor always taught me where I sow there I am going to reap. You know I tell you up to this day I have never been turned down wherever I sell my artisan work, they want more, I have work and I do not lack money. Because let's say I am faithful with my tithes and in addition to that I sow ... I know that God is not going to make me lack [anything] because I trust that I am never going to lack money. I have this in my mind.

Both Rosa's and Pablo's comments reflect action-consequence theology. There is a pattern of giving and sharing with any and all kinds of people, even with

24 This is most likely an allusion to Mal 3:10, which is a commonly quoted passage that grants a believer the right to question or test God whether God will answer the believer with a financial blessing in response to giving for "God's work," be it to a mega-church ministry, building project, or to the poor.

25 *Camba* is a person native of eastern Bolivian lowlands.

26 *Colla* is a native of the Bolivian Andes.

“drunkards.” This is somewhat surprising, since Pentecostal pastors often urge the faithful to “sow” [i.e., give] into their churches and ministries, or at the very least to the faithful rather than “drunkards.” The concrete experience of God’s blessing and provision as a response to the believer’s faithful giving has clearly been etched into the mind of Pablo, as he himself testifies. This is in no way diminished by the fact that the provision (at least here) came through a somewhat wealthier relative who lived in Spain.

Yet, as one might wonder, if the action-consequence theology works positively, does it also work negatively? That is, if the believer rebels or disobeys God, will there be negative consequences as well? Though the logical step is rather obvious, there was only one instance in all of the discussions when this negative retribution came across.

Daniel: Like what happened in my church . . . one sister had three children and she worried a lot about her children and her work and everything. And one day the three children were burned [in a fire] in the house and the three children died. And it was hard for her and for the whole church . . . but there . . . God made us . . . put Him in the first place [in our life] . . . the sister did not understand it at the moment but afterwards she was able to comprehend [it] and God blessed her with two other beautiful children. And He blessed her business even more or that this problem turned out for good.²⁷ So . . . like the pastor says, my priorities . . .

The story that Daniel related offered clues how the negative side of the action-consequence theology might work. It seemed that the tragic accident and the resulting death of the three children was connected to the overt preoccupations and mistaken priorities on the part of the woman. In what way the two were connected is not exactly clear, however, since Daniel failed to make an explicit connection between “worrying about children” and “burning of the house,” and neither was God seen as the author of the accident. The aftermath of the incident certainly had an effect of “forcing” her and the whole community to their knees and rearranging their priorities; yet, after the tragedy, a set of positive consequences followed, presumably as a result of positive action that was subsequently taken. Even so, it is perhaps premature to draw general conclusions from one example, harsh as the example is, as to how action-consequence theology might work out negatively.

God’s goodness and love were clearly emphasized in the reading of the group. God was variously seen as the good Father and the good King. Both

27 One can hardly miss here allusions to Job’s story in the Bible.

metaphors prompted reflections on and trust in God's goodness, blessing, and provision. On the other hand, the group also pondered the responsibility of the believer. In this, they encouraged one another to actively pursue faith and active outworking of that faith. It came across in various ways, but the action-consequence theology was perhaps its most concrete manifestation.

4.1.1.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

The hermeneutical patterns of the group followed a fairly predictable pattern. There was little concern for the separation of ancient and present-day contexts. The appropriation of the text was often direct, and historical realities were alluded to even less than in some of the earlier readings. The socio-economic location was reflected particularly as the group shared some of the worries that they had.

The heuristic keys to the text seemed to be the twin foci of seeking/faith and God's goodness. God provides the basic necessities of life but the believer is also encouraged to seek God's kingdom. The tension between these perspectives was never resolved. The text prompted discussions on the relevance of action-consequence theology. This was closely related to both God's goodness and to the incentive toward active faith. "Sowing" (or giving) seemed to be an important way of interpreting the phrase "seeking the kingdom" in the text. This was often, though not always, connected with money. The terminology of "sowing" (and "reaping") is used in the Pentecostal tradition in many places around the world to indicate God's blessing and provision in response to believers' level of giving.²⁸ God's provision, according to the group, was clearly connected to God's character (Good Father, King) and to the believer's faith that was demonstrated through sharing of one's resources.

There was a longing for upward mobility, but discourse on material wealth as God's reward to the faithful was non-existent unless the pastor's comment is understood as such. His comment regarding material abundance²⁹ was rather brief and faded into the background soon. What is notable in his comments is that it reflected a theology that is often used by the so-called "prosperity" churches to justify wealth and possession. That is, believers are the children of the King and, therefore, are entitled to abundance.³⁰ Nevertheless, the main accent remained on God's provision of basic necessities, or perhaps a little more than that, and there was little talk about prosperity in a sense of material

28 In Bolivia, see especially Mansanilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico y el neopentecostalismo," 6–22.

29 "I also, as a son of the King, am able to wear nice clothes and have things that they have."

30 E.g. Mansanilla, "El pentecostalismo clásico y el neopentecostalismo," 6–22.

wealth. This perspective may be seen particularly in Daniel's interpretation of Solomon's wisdom.

And I love the attitude of Solomon that he had when God says to him. Ask me what you want and I am going to give it to you. And God applauded Solomon's attitude because He said to him, "For what you did not ask me I am going to give you, I am going to make you three times richer." Because what Solomon asked Him [for] was wisdom . . . Oh that I would be able to guard into my heart those qualities [and] attitudes that Jesus had on the earth . . . and for having those things then I am going to have all that I need.

The notable part in Daniel's interpretation is the final phrase where he concludes that imitation of Jesus (and Solomon) will guarantee that one's needs are met, but not necessarily one's wants. In the context of Solomon's wisdom and riches, it would have been easy to follow the pattern in the story of Solomon; that is, seeking God (or wisdom) brings riches just as it happened to Solomon. After all, the method of direct appropriation, or correspondence of terms,³¹ was used from time to time by the group. In addition, this line of argumentation would have fitted the action-consequence theology rather well. Yet, Daniel did not make that hermeneutical move which in itself is rather significant. In light of this, it seems rather likely that the group's socio-economic status influenced the interpretation of the passage above as well as the action-consequence theology in general. Further, as mentioned earlier, *pastora's* sarcastic comments on the upper-class life style and clothing seemed to be a critique of the status and income discrepancy that was all too apparent. Though the pastor marshaled a theological argument (children of the King deserve the best) and strong faith to move to a "different environment," he admitted the difficulty of the task.

In addition to the discourse on action-consequence theology and God's goodness and seeking, the group reflected briefly on the *camba* cultural patterns and identity. Aspects of *camba* culture were briefly criticized in light of the group's theological convictions and, later on, Pablo briefly praised the *camba* pattern of generosity. Finally, the Pentecostal worldview with its strong faith in the miraculous power of God came across strongly. God answered a prayer by providing a means of transportation for the evangelists and seemed to take care of the faithful by means of provision and blessings, as indicated by Pablo, Rosa, and others.

31 Cf. Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 142–153.

4.1.2 *Privileged Group's Reading of Luke 12:22–34*

4.1.2.1 Possessions and Social Status

The privileged group's socio-economic status came across clearly in their reading as they discussed their worries (or lack of them).

Pastor: I remember for example when I was a boy and never worried what I would eat. I went to the fridge and took, and I never worried for [anything] because my father brought me [food].

Vanessa: To be preparing for the birthday party of my son and I say to the Lord [that] I do not need to spend so much time in my head . . . [thinking, worrying about] problems and . . . what is our future going look like, our children, the future we want, inheritance, many things. These [are the things] . . . that are in our mind all day long.

Pastor: Because it is the major worry . . . because the root of all evil is the love of money and all of us are seeking to have more and this is the truth and he who says to the contrary is a liar.

Ester: I was recently so worried about the day I am going to move because I have to move out of my house . . . I was so worried to the point where my friend . . . told me not to worry as the Lord knows the day.

Ruben: Do not worry [for] there are no problems and the owner of the house said us the same thing . . . so the worry was gone.

As the examples demonstrate, the worries that the group experienced included a great variety but none about the basic necessities of life. Rather, the focus was on changing rental properties, future inheritance, children's birthday parties, and issues that reflected socio-economically a more affluent outlook. In addition to these, the group commented on issues such as a lost suitcase on a business trip to China.

The privileged status of the group was also reflected in numerous other situations and the life-contexts in which the examples were given. For instance, the pastor used the difficulties he had encountered in securing a meeting place for the church from a five-star hotel as a lesson for overcoming worries.

Nobody can add anything to one's life. I learned . . . to make a decision not to worry . . . because we had a lot of fighting with the hotel for the payment and it was . . . darn . . . it was a thing that they did not give us . . . the hotel . . . but God trains one.

He continued with another example from his own life as he went through difficult times financially but eventually received a large sum of money.

I went through something and it is with respect to money that was a demonstration... that God... we were with Gloria [wife]... we were selling our furniture and things of the house so that we could live with what we had at the time. We were selling and selling and that is how we lived... and when I arrived in the bank with... a very large check to pay the taxes... I came with a *micro* and I hated going with *micro* because people stepped on your feet and your hands smelled from touching the iron [handles]. The first thing that I did when I entered the bank was to go to the restroom to wash my hands... then I remember when I made that transaction and when I left from there... I did not immediately go to my inheritance because it was a lot of money.

Particularly, the pastor talked a lot about money in relation to the passage. For example, he related how he used to accompany and observe the lifestyle of the millionaires before being a pastor.

I saw people... rich people [and] I for example used to walk with them like God allowed me to do, with millionaires that really did not give one *peso* [claps hands]. The guy did not lose one single cent and there God showed me,³² look, I went in their Mercedes and arrived, went in taxi there with them. God allowed me to see where their treasure truly is, because the heart so easily inclines... to the... natural, right? We need to be inclined to the kingdom really. When we have the kingdom, God provides, let's say, all the money.

I lived in this [situation]... in my own flesh... many years ago... I walked with Joreo Valder and... I knew him and saw really that... they live day and night in the banks... one does not have peace even though one has so much money... or lack of presence of God.

Evidently, the pastor had observed closely the way millionaires lived and concluded that they did not have inner peace. The discussion about money became rather passionate on the part of the pastor though other group

32 The language of "God showed me" and the like, which refers either to the direct speech by God's Spirit or Spirit-inspired insight, is typical in a Pentecostal/charismatic movement and is particularly common in the pastor's comments (see further in Chambe, "Tuve una importante revelación," 11–48; *Teología Pentecostal Popular*, 208–245).

members were not that interested in it. Though the pastor criticized the millionaires' self-centered focus on money, he was quite ready to grant that a believer may become a millionaire as well.

Something happened to me concerning money . . . there was a difference of eight thousand dollars, which is [worth about] twenty-one thousand now . . . I had nothing and then . . . God spoke to me, "I can make you a millionaire just like that in one day if I want." Then you have nothing . . . and you get . . . twenty one thousand dollars . . . [it] makes you think why do the rich have money . . . they have the vision of what money looks like so they have . . . the anxiety . . . but it works . . . It is a spiritual principle when you do not receive money; you have a focus that you are not going to have . . . how is it possible that I received twenty-one thousand dollars back then? Yes, or it is for us according to what we believe that it happens.

The pastor's money discourse credited his sudden economic success³³ to his faith in God. On the other hand, in his view, the reason why some did not have is because they did not focus on it; they perceived the lack but evidently did nothing about it. Thus, action-consequence theology seemed to frame the pastor's thinking here; the particular action here being faith and the resulting consequence a great sum of money. This will be discussed in more details in the section below.

Perhaps surprisingly, there was little discussion on actual giving or sharing. As a matter of fact, Carina's comment was one of the few comments that encouraged sharing of material benefits with others.³⁴

To trust Him . . . God delights to give us His kingdom and all of the additions in the kingdom because He knows what we have. [It is important] to banish oneself and detach oneself from the material of the heart. To be generous, give to others and in the spiritual that we work for the eternity, to win souls, love others.

Though Carina's comment encourages giving and generosity, the recipients of the generosity are not detailed. Loving one another may imply giving to every-

33 It is important to note the pastor's earlier comments that he had never lacked food or basic necessities in his life earlier. When he says that he had nothing, it needs to be seen in the context.

34 It is perhaps noteworthy that José was absent during the conversation since he has been the only one who consistently advocated and encouraged social responsibility and material sharing as the responsibility of the Christians.

one and anyone, but this is not highlighted here. Also, there is an emphasis on mental distancing from material possessions.

Overall, the passage prompted a discussion on worries and anxieties in the group and these provided a window into the groups' socio-economic status. All of the group members seem to enjoy a rather comfortable and affluent life-style.³⁵ Though the pastor criticized the self-centeredness of the wealthy, at the same time he expressed a desire to become a millionaire. Apparently, he also was quite certain that God grants wealth and material affluence to a person who has strong faith.

4.1.2.2 Salvation and Benefit

The entire group considered God as a source of blessing and goodness. Specifically, the concept of the kingdom or the kingdom of God prompted comments.

Pastor: What is the kingdom?

Carina: It is His presence, to know the word so that faith grows in us.

Ruben: Yes, it is, it is.

Pastora: It is, Jesus Christ says seek the kingdom and his righteousness.³⁶ The righteousness of the kingdom is Christ. And, because [it is] to walk in this righteousness that he has done in us . . . So seek Christ and everything that is in the kingdom and his righteousness is going to be impregnated, imparted to us in order to walk in these works of righteousness.

Ruben: We know that we have to come to understand that God is going to be our king and he will take care of all of our life and He is going to guide us.

Pastor: And here . . . when it says seek the kingdom of God. There is everything in the kingdom . . . this is what it says, let's say we seek the . . . not the kingdom of money—that in it [kingdom] there is everything.

35 This came across already earlier in section 2.2.4 where the group's income statistics were presented, but the outworking of the income categories is reflected more specifically here.

36 *Pastora* clearly connects Jesus' teaching in Luke 12:22–34 here to its parallel passage in Matt 6:25–34.

God's kingdom is variously equated with the person of Jesus, God's presence, and God's love and care and guidance in the life of the believer. Though no concrete references were mentioned above, it seems that every good thing imaginable is included in the kingdom of God.³⁷ Additionally, seeking Christ and the kingdom were important for the believer to receive its benefits and blessings.

Some in the group thought that great material benefits of God's kingdom accompanied strong faith, whereas others were more modest in quantifying the benefits. Nevertheless, the basis of God's provision was His goodness. After criticizing the self-centeredness of rich people, the pastor continued.

Pastor: In reality . . . riches as a result of a life in God are . . . it is another perspective and we are never going to accumulate because the one who has, gives . . . And that is a principle of the kingdom. So, one receives . . . one receives because in the moment that we start to accumulate [snaps fingers] there we put our trust. From there we start . . . [makes whistling sounds with mouth] . . . and the avarice enters, you see.

Ruben: If you have, enjoy what you have and then you have more, but not to accumulate.³⁸

Pastor: Yes, to pass it along.

Ruben: To be generous and give what you have.

Pastor: In fact you are increasing in your possessions, right?

Ruben: Yes, yes.

Pastor: Because your company is worth more, you can have the one thousand two hundred apartments like the *Roca*³⁹ [pastor laughs loudly—others do not laugh].

37 Another member of the group gave a lengthy testimony how she had learned to control her mental anxieties. She explained that God helped her "renew her mind" through prayer and meditation.

38 The Spanish here is rather unclear.

39 *Roca* is a luxury condominium in the city.

The pastor's comments seemed somewhat contradictory as he at first equated non-accumulation of possessions and giving, but then he switched to the idea of gaining surplus material wealth as a result of sharing. Thus, despite the humor and initial hesitation, it seemed that particularly the pastor connected material wealth with faith and virtue of sharing. Wealth was a consequence of giving though it was not clear to whom one should give.⁴⁰ The pastor also indicated that the "principle of the kingdom" means that the one who gives also receives. Thus, action-consequence theology is the underlying theological principle here.

On another occasion, the pastor presented Creflo Dollar,⁴¹ a famous American television evangelist, as an exemplary figure who worked his way to wealth and prosperity by faith and perseverance.

It happens to us according to our faith. Creflo Dollar, do you know him? This pastor seven years ago declared that he was a millionaire and for seven years had the testing. He preached among the rats in the schools. Now he is a millionaire, the guy. [It is] because he obeyed God. What makes you trust in God is obedience. People [try to] create faith often. Faith is not [the same as] to believe. It starts with believing . . . with faith you subject to the word of God. When you believe you subject yourself to the word of God and that's how faith comes.

Despite the difficulty of defining exactly the difference between "believing" and "faith" here, the pastor clearly upheld Creflo Dollar as a model who became a millionaire through faith and obedience. Once again in the pastor's testimony, the action of faith and obedience was followed by the consequence of material wealth and blessing. Thus, according to the pastor, it is possible to obtain blessings to the point that an individual may become a millionaire.⁴² Thus, it appears that faith and the subsequent blessing is, at least in principle, possible

40 Though it is not apparent here, earlier (see comments on Luke 6:20–26) the pastor had stated that giving to the materially poor is not generally beneficial since the real problem of poverty lies in the underlying spiritual problems rather than physical poverty or otherwise (see his comments on pp. 132–135).

41 On another occasion, the pastor cited Benny Hinn (another American tele-evangelist) as a model of faith and virtue. This time, his example focused on his spiritual authority and ability to perform miracles rather than material wealth. He had apparently watched Hinn's teachings on Youtube.

42 It is difficult to estimate to what extent the statement uses rhetorical exaggeration. Based on the pastor's example about Creflo Dollar and his use of the word "millionaire," however, it seems that he does indicate this literally.

for anyone to attain. While the pastor talked about becoming a millionaire, Ruben was more modest in his claims with regard to material blessings.

It is a process that takes a whole life [talks about seeking the kingdom]. This process is beautiful, because it gives you peace and there is truly an answer for your life, and you do not lack work, you never lack a place to live. You are not going to receive millions but you have what you need.

Though there were differences of opinion on the exact magnitude of God's blessing and provision to the faithful and obedient, everyone in the group agreed about God being willing to grant great material benefits. The benefits were connected to faith and obedience, and here particularly to "seeking the kingdom."⁴³ The underlying theology seems to be God's goodness in rewarding the faithful.

4.1.2.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

The hermeneutical approaches of the group followed a similar pattern of the earlier reading. There was little concern for the separation of ancient and present-day contexts. The appropriation of the text was often direct, and historical realities of the text were hardly alluded to. Socio-economic location was reflected as the group shared some of the worries they had experienced. Apart from Ruben's brief comment,⁴⁴ nobody had experienced material lack. Further, the pastor's comments of God's provision reflected what could be termed as prosperity theology—that God's benefit and blessing to the faithful may make one a literal millionaire.

"Seeking the kingdom" seemed to be one of the heuristic keys to unlock the meaning of the text. It was often freely separated from the narrative context and interpreted in light of the group's Pentecostal theological framework and current life circumstances. It also led to the discussion on various kinds of worries and how to overcome them, though the worries were not connected to basic needs of food and clothing. For some, "seeking the kingdom" meant the importance of proactive action.

Ruben: something that impressed me here is the principle of seeking; seeking the kingdom. It does not say [that] I have to go immediately there [kingdom] but to seek [it].

43 At times "and his righteousness/justice" [Spanish *justicia*] was added, most likely due to the influence of Matt 6:33 (RV).

44 Ruben's comment about material lack reflected an experience from a rather distant past.

Pastor: One must go to the things . . . we talked about this on Sunday . . . let your kingdom come . . . which is “let your kingdom” is evangelism, win, win [over] lives⁴⁵ . . . the kingdom is to win lives, to bring the kingdom of God . . . to pray that there would be more.

Seeking the kingdom also prompted faith in God and helped group members overcome practical worries in life.⁴⁶

The proactive seeking of the kingdom was closely related to action-consequence theology. Faith and especially the virtue of giving were connected to blessing, material prosperity, and overall wellbeing.⁴⁷ To whom one should give, however, was not specified; the poor or materially less fortunate were not explicitly mentioned. This is noteworthy, specifically because the text mentions the poor explicitly (12:33). It is also of interest that v. 33, in which selling possessions and giving to the poor is mentioned, was not commented at all,⁴⁸ and total divestiture was not mentioned or considered. Rather, the focus of the passage seemed to lean on the positive benefits of the kingdom in the believer's life, and the conditions of these benefits were often framed with action-consequence theology. The pastor's comments, which were often dominant and rhetorically strong, focused on a monetary discourse and often emphasized prosperity and material benefits. Thus, the immediate text's narrative context, which is about the material lack of Jesus' disciples and giving to the poor, was not significant to the group. Rather, the emphasis for them was on “seeking the kingdom” through faith, prayer, evangelism, and practical actions; this helped them overcome various kinds of worries in daily life and potentially would bring numerous benefits to the believer, including material prosperity.

4.1.3 *Comparison of Marginalized and Privileged Reading of Luke 12:22–34*

Both groups focused on similar issues such as seeking the kingdom, the importance of faith, and how to overcome worries in daily life. God was viewed as a Father, provider, and a good King. Both groups also emphasized the

45 Here the Spanish *ganar vidas* seems to mean to win over people to the kingdom of God.

46 As indicated earlier, these worries included a range of issues from financial to psychological to everyday matters.

47 The pastor also emphasized miracles as important aspects of the kingdom.

48 One of the questions given to the group asked to comment specifically on the meaning of vv. 32–34. The only comments that were related to this were the importance of gaining treasures in heaven and general comments on where one's heart and treasure lay.

action-consequence theology and saw faith and obedience as important virtues that “moved” God to grant blessings and benefits to the believer. However, whereas the privileged group (PG) emphasized God’s benefits for the faithful, and the possibility of great material wealth (esp. pastor), the marginalized group (MG) focused on the provision of basic needs and necessities. This became apparent even if the pastor of MG expressed a desire, and a strong faith, for upward social mobility. Here the different socio-economic status of the two groups was evident in their different interpretations of the passage. Thus, in PG’s reading, things that were given as a result of “seeking the kingdom” were no longer the basic needs mentioned in the narrative but much more than that. In a sense, the MG kept closer to the text here than the PG.

With the possible exception of the pastor, the PG members seemed to be rather satisfied with their social location. They saw God as the provider of their material comforts but also criticized stinginess and avarice of the wealthy. Some in the MG, on the other hand, expressed a desire for upward mobility though many were skeptical about this. Still, the group expressed dissatisfaction with their social location and criticized briefly the lifestyle of the wealthy. The precarious condition of the group became evident in the discussions. Not surprisingly, some longed for “better things” and higher socio-economic status, though in practice it seemed like a distant reality.

Both groups largely ignored the historical context of the text and lifted the idea of “seeking the kingdom” rather freely in both their interpretations. At times, however, the MG followed the narrative more closely than the PG. This became apparent in 12:33, which focuses on selling possessions, giving alms, and giving to the poor. With the exception of few comments on the importance of “storing treasures in heaven,” the PG largely ignored the entire section. Yet, this statement had little to do with giving to the poor or selling one’s possessions but rather with one’s “inner attitude”⁴⁹ and general generosity. As such, there were no comments on the importance of giving or helping the poor on the part of the PG. On the other hand, the MG commented rather extensively on vv. 32–34. They mentioned the importance of faith and not being afraid as well as sharing and giving to the poor and even to “drunkards.” As the existence of community’s soup kitchen indicated, this sharing was both individual and communal. Finally, some group members entertained the possibility that the text referred to the total divestiture on the part of individuals. The PG did not discuss this possibility. Even though both groups focused on similar themes

49 The importance of inner attitude obviously does not rule out giving and sharing, which ideas were mentioned a few times. The poor and needy, however, were not specified as those who would receive the benefits.

(kingdom, seeking, worries, faith etc.), neither employed significantly different interpretative methods or approaches.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it seems that the groups' social locations played role in their respective interpretations of the text. As such, the PG read the text from the perspective of relative affluence and the MG from the position of socio-economic marginalization. This probably also contributed to the PG's understanding of the text and the importance of material provision; and also possibly to their ignoring the importance of sharing their wealth with the poor.⁵¹

Finally, both groups showed little or no interest in the historical background or meaning of the text. Rather, they read the text in light of their own life circumstances, religious experience, and theological conviction. The text seemed to provide encouragement for both groups as they attempted to overcome daily struggles and remain faithful to God.

Before exploring these ideas further, an historical reading of the same text (Luke 12:22–34) will be conducted. After that, I conclude the section by exploring the relationship between the Bolivian ordinary readers' interpretations and my own historical reading of the passage.

4.2 Historical Readings of Luke 12:22–34

The saying on anxiety and the kingdom seemed to be one of the favorite passages that the groups read during the study.⁵² It is also rather well commented in the scholarly literature.⁵³ The storyline of the saying is rather simple, and the basic points are quite similar in two slightly different versions (Matt 6:25–34// Luke 12:22–34) in the New Testament.⁵⁴ Jesus exhorts the disciples not to worry

50 Perhaps this could be qualified somewhat. MG seemed to have employed slightly more Scriptural allusions and followed the text a bit more closely than PG.

51 This conclusion should not be seen too dogmatically, since the group did indicate that sharing with the poor is of some importance later on.

52 It is unclear what the exact reasons for this were. It may be that the theme of worry and anxiety is generally easy to identify with. Similarly, it seems to have resonated well with the theology of the groups; that is, the themes of God's goodness and fatherly care and the emphasis on "seeking" and personal responsibility are important themes in Pentecostal theology.

53 See the references to scholarly literature below.

54 The saying is also found in Q12:22–31; Coptic *Gos. Thom.* 36 and the Greek version of *Gos. Thom.* 36 in P.Oxy 655, i, 1–17, which is much longer than the Coptic version.

about life's basic necessities and instead to seek the kingdom and trust in God's fatherly provision.⁵⁵

Despite the similarities between Matthew's and Luke's versions, Luke's interpretation of the saying is more dependent on the surrounding literary context.⁵⁶ As many scholars have pointed out, there is an important link between the preceding parable of the Rich Fool (12:13–21) and the subsequent discourse on anxiety and the kingdom (12:22–34).⁵⁷ Some even see Jesus' address to the disciples as a "commentary" on the parable to the disciples.⁵⁸ Thus, in its final Lucan version, the saying should be read together with the parable. However, the connection between the preceding and following sections is less certain (12:1–8; 12:35–59) though some would see 12:4–13:9 as a complete literary unit.⁵⁹ In addition, there is a broader thematic link to the previous section that deals with fear and worry in a situation of persecution (12:8–12; esp. 12:11).

While Luke derives a bulk of the material in 12:22–34 from Q, there are disagreements over whether his or Matthew's version retains more original Q form and wording. Though both utilize the rabbinic lesser-to-greater argument, Matthew formulates the discourse largely in the form of rhetorical questions (Matt 6:25, 26, 30, 31), whereas Luke uses direct statements (Luke 12:23, 24, 28, 29). Though redaction could work either way, Matthew's form is generally considered closer to the original Q.⁶⁰ Further, Luke's "ravens" (κόρακας) is

55 The major difference is that Luke adds 12:32–33 which is about not being afraid and selling one's possessions.

56 This is not to say that Matthew's version was independent of its context. Specifically, Matt 6:19–21 finds a clear connection to the subsequent saying on anxiety; however, Matt 6:22–23, though related, is less clearly connected.

57 Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Vol. 1. *The Gospel According to Luke* (Kindle edition. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 244–246; John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (Vol. 35b. WBC. Dallas: Word Publisher, 1993), 690; Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 147–157.

58 E.g. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XIV*. Vol 2. *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, vol. 29; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985), 976.

59 Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts*, 240; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 2488–2633.

60 Thus e.g. Q 12:32 per Robinson et al. (James M. Robinson et al., *The Critical Edition of Q. Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 353–355); Arthur J. Dewey and Robert J. Miller (*The Complete Gospel Parallels: Synopsis of the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Thomas, Peter, and Other Gospel Fragments and the Reconstructed Q Gospel* [Salem, Ore.: Polebridge Press, 2012], 313) give

to be preferred to Matthew's "birds of the air" (τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), which probably echoes the creation story in Gen 1–3 (LXX).⁶¹ The phrase καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ (and his righteousness) betrays the typical Matthean theme and vocabulary and is to be considered secondary.⁶² Luke should probably be attributed with certain changes in wording, such as the omission of ὑμῶν (you) in vv. 22 and 24, substitution of κατανοήσατε (consider) in v. 24,⁶³ and μετεωρίζεσθε (worrying; *hapax*) in v. 29.⁶⁴

Many scholars see the section Luke 12:22–34, and particularly 12:22b–31, as largely traditional.⁶⁵ According to James Robinson and Christoph Heil, scholars have identified four sections in Q_{12:22b–31} that betrays possible redaction.⁶⁶ Since these were already present in Q, they were transmitted to Matthew and

no reason for their choice. It could be also argued that Luke's wording is closer to the original since it is less elaborate. Funk and Miller retain Luke's wording over Matthew's (Robert W. Funk and Robert J. Miller, *The Sayings Gospel Q: The Text of Q* [NRSV]. Cited 5 February 2013. Online: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/q-funk.html>. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/q-funk.html>). T. J. Dillon ("Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:25–34/Luke 12:22–31)," *CBQ* 53 [1991], 605–627), however, reminds that the rhetorical questions are much at home in Jewish wisdom discourse. Similarly, Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 526.

- 61 Dillon, "Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom of God," 605–627. Gen 1:20 (LXX) καὶ πετεινὰ πετόμενα . . . κατὰ τὸ στερέωμα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.
- 62 Typical vocabulary or typical theological theme per se is never on its own a mark of inauthenticity or redaction. However, here the parallel passage in Luke lends credibility to the fact that καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ is Matthew's redaction.
- 63 Matthew has ἐμβλέψατε and καταμάθετε in 6:26, 28, respectively.
- 64 See further in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XIV*, 975–977; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 690–696; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 525–532.
- 65 With varying degrees, see Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition* (trans. J. Marsh. New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 324–328; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 525–532; Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 147–157; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XIV*, 974–983; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 216–223; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 524–531; Dillon, "Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom of God," 605–627; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 690–695; John M. Robinson, "A Written Greek Sayings Cluster Older than Q: A Vestige," *HTR* 92 (1999): 61–77; John M. Robinson and Christopher Heil, "The Lillies of the Field: Saying 36 of the Gospel of Thomas and Secondary Accretions in Q 12:22b–31," *NTS* 25 (2001): 1–25; Robert H. Gundry, "Spinning Lilies and Unraveling the Ravens: An Alternative Reading of Q_{12:22b–31} and P. Oxy 655," *NTS* 48 (2002): 159–180; Francois Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*. (Lc 9:51–14:35) (Biblioteca de Estudios Bíblicos 86; trans. A. García; Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2002), 355–356.
- 66 Robinson and Heil, "The Lillies of the Field," 1–25; Robinson, "A Written Greek Sayings Cluster," 61–77. They primarily argue for the priority of *Gos. Thom.* 36 (in Greek version of

Luke without significant change. The sections that have been considered intrusive are Q12:23, 25, 27a, and 31.⁶⁷ The redaction of the passage seems to have happened largely at the pre-Q level and as such is difficult to trace. For the purpose of this study, it is only the last section that merits more detailed review.

Regarding Q 12:31, Robinson and Heil state that “[t]he mentioning of the kingdom of God . . . is . . . to be classified as a foreign element.” Their arguments may be summarized as follows: First, God’s care is not conditioned by the nearness of the kingdom and thus the section functions without the intrusion of the kingdom.⁶⁸ Second, the final high point of the discourse was already reached in 12:29 and therefore the saying on βασιλεία (kingdom) is anticlimactic and should be seen as a later appendix. Third, βασιλεία (kingdom) occurs only in 12:31, after the closing *inclusio* in 12:29–30, which harks back to 12:22b.⁶⁹

Robinson and Heil’s arguments that follow betray weaknesses, and it is possible to see a connection between the βασιλεία (kingdom) saying and the preceding section. First, it is true that God’s care is not conditioned (or necessitated) by the coming of βασιλεία (kingdom), but His rule may be seen as something that intensifies the expectation of God’s care here.⁷⁰ Second, it is not necessary to see the βασιλεία (kingdom) saying as anticlimactic, since “seeking the kingdom” (ζητεῖτε τὴν βασιλείαν) forms a fitting contrast with the gentiles who are “seeking after all these things” (ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα . . . ἐπιζητοῦσιν).⁷¹ Third, the *inclusio* in 12:29–30 that harks back to 12:22b is in fact only connected to 12:29.⁷² Nevertheless, Robinson and Heil call 12:30 as a fitting closing

P.Oxy. 655, i, 1–17). However, Gundry (“Spinning Lillies,” 159–180) has convincingly argued for the dependence of Greek *Gos. Thom.* 36 on the Q or its canonical derivatives.

67 The phrase οὐτε νήθει οὐτε ὑφαίνει in v. 27 seems to be a stylistic refinement (e.g. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 136).

68 Robinson and Heil, “The Lillies of the Field,” 17.

69 Robinson and Heil, “The Lillies of the Field,” 18–21.

70 The fact that God’s rule is connected to deliverance from all kinds of evil and misfortune in HB and Second Temple literature should not be ignored (Exod 15:18; Isa 33:20–22; 43:1–8; 44:6–8; 52:7; Dan 2:36–45; 7:1–27; Sir 36:1–17; Jdt 9:12–14; Pss. Sol. 2:30–32). See further, John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 2. Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 243–288.

71 Gundry, “Spinning Lillies,” 176. Gundry further adds that the argument would be further strengthened if Q12:29 would be assigned Lucan wording (“do not seek,” μὴ ζητεῖτε) in Luke 12:29 rather than Matthew’s (μὴ μεριμνήσητε) in Matt 6:31. Gundry states that this is somewhat questionable (“Spinning Lillies,” 176). Nevertheless, Funk and Miller retain Luke’s version (“And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink”) in their NRSV version of Q (*The Sayings Gospel Q*).

72 Gundry, “Spinning Lillies,” 176–177.

to the saying.⁷³ As well, there is a suitable comparison between gentiles seeking ταῦτα . . . πάντα (these . . . things) and Jesus' exhortation for disciples to seek βασιλεία (kingdom).⁷⁴

Despite the arguments of Robinson and Heil (and others), it is possible to read Q12:22b–31 as a continuous unit. The section that might be secondary in the saying is the section 12:25. Yet, one should probably look for reasonably clear connections rather than expect formal logic from an originally oral saying. Luke no doubt received the entire section from Q and then made his own contributions to it as a redactor. In addition to giving nuances to various sections, Luke has included 12:32–34, part of which comes from his hand and part from traditional material.

Luke 12:32 is probably a compilation of traditional motifs (Father, kingdom, little flock, fear not)⁷⁵ that connect conveniently to the preceding section as it seeks to strengthen and comfort the disciples. It is possible to see 12:33a (πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην; sell your possessions and give alms) as part of Q.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, since it betrays such typical Lucan wording and terminology, it is better to see it as coming from Luke at least as it stands here.⁷⁷ The latter part of the verse (12:33b), on the other hand, is difficult to evaluate since Luke and Matthew agree on the basic idea of gathering treasures in heaven⁷⁸ but differ somewhat in their wording.⁷⁹ It is possible that Luke 12:33b and Matt 6:20 draw from Q but that Luke takes more liberties in

73 Robinson and Heil, "The Lillies of the Field," 18; Gundry, "Spinning Lilies," 177; Nolland (*Luke 9:21–18:34*, 691), on the other hand, sees the saying as an intrusion and not part of the traditional material.

74 Gundry, "Spinning Lilies," 176–177.

75 E.g. Amos 7:2, 7; Jer 13:17; Zech 10:3; Dan 7:14; Bultmann (*The History of Synoptic*, 111, 127) sees the section as a community creation; Nolland (*Luke 9:21–18:34*, 691, 693–694) affirms the historicity though cautiously. Bovon (*El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 382) opines that v. 32 is an isolated logion without explaining further.

76 Funk and Miller *The Sayings Gospel Q*.

77 E.g. πωλήσατε, τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, ἐλεημοσύνην (16:9; 18:22; cf. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm. I–II*, 548). The motif of selling one's possessions and giving alms to the poor is a theme that is undoubtedly pre-Lucan even if he may heighten it at times.

78 Matthew intensifies the idea by making an explicit comparison between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19–21//Luke 12:33–34).

79 Perhaps the most obvious difference in wording is Matthew's repetition of the key word "treasure" which is lacking in Luke: μὴ θησαυρίζετε . . . θησαυροὺς . . . ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς . . . θησαυρίζετε . . . θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ in Matthew and ποιήσατε . . . βαλλάντια . . . θησαυρόν . . . ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς in Luke.

regards to his source.⁸⁰ The final verse of the section (Luke 12:34) follows Q with the exception that Luke has the plural ὑμεῖν (you) whereas Q12:34 (and Matt 6:21) retain the more original wording.

There are various scholarly suggestions regarding the genre of the saying. Some view it primarily as a prophetic and eschatological discourse while others emphasize the wisdom elements.⁸¹ Some scholars place the saying within the Greco-Roman *topos* of covetousness.⁸² It seems that the wisdom element is the strongest aspect of the discourse though one can also detect prophetic and eschatological elements. A number of features in the discourse include vocabulary and ideas that are at home in wisdom literature. The most notable of these are the observation of the natural world, persistent seeking of wisdom (or kingdom here), and the importance of almsgiving with its resulting rewards (e.g. Prov 2:1–5; 14:6; 6:6–8; 30:24–28; Wis 7:7–14; Tob 4:8–11; Sir 29:11–12; Pss. Sol. 9:9).⁸³ Further, it betrays typical features of the wisdom genre, such as the alternation of indicative and imperative as well as advice and explanation.⁸⁴ It is the presence of the kingdom of God as well as the demand for radical trust in God with regard to one's possessions that introduce the prophetic and eschatological elements to this sapiential discourse. Yet, it is important to note that wisdom and prophetic/eschatological discourses were not mutually exclusive during the Second Temple period.⁸⁵

The original context of the saying (Q12:22b–31/Lk 12:22–34//Matt 6:25–34) is Jesus' address to the disciples who had left everything to follow him and perhaps also a crowd of Galilean peasants who were listening to his

80 Similarly, Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 364–383; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 531–532; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 694–695.

81 For a view that the saying is primarily prophetic/eschatological, see Herman Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World. Travel Narrative I (Luke 9:51–13:21)* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000) 225, 207; Dillon, “Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom,” 605–627; Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 243. For a leaning on wisdom discourse, see Matthew Rindge, Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool: Luke 12:13–34 among Ancient Conversations on Death and Possessions (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 159–230; Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 361–363; Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, 216–223; John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 193–206.

82 Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Christianization of a Topos (Luke 12:13–34),” *NovT*. 38 (1996): 123–135; Thomas D. Stegman, “Reading Luke 12:13–34 as an Elaboration of a Chreia: How Hermogenes of Tarsus Sheds Light on Luke's Gospel,” *NovT*. 49 (2007): 328–352.

83 Cf. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, 218–220.

84 Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 362–363.

85 See especially, Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 193–206; 1987, 216–223.

preaching.⁸⁶ There is a considerable scholarly discussion regarding the socio-economic situation of the first century Galilee prior to the destruction of the Temple. The focus of the debate revolves around the degree of socio-economic and political oppression of the Jewish people as well as the number of people who lived on or below subsistence level. There are essentially two competing views.

According to one view, Galilee was characterized by large-scale poverty and oppression, especially as a result of debts and taxes.⁸⁷ Thus, for example, Richard Horsley states that the intense tax burdens and the increased indebtedness resulted in “large numbers of people looking for day-labor and increasing numbers of people who had become tenants on others’ estates.”⁸⁸ In this view, loss of ancestral lands and socioeconomic burden is highlighted. According to the second view, the socio-economic situation was less dire than assumed by the scholars of the first view.⁸⁹ David Fiensy states that evidence does not “support a huge, rural, and half-starving proletariat” in Galilee.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, this does not mean that poverty and destitution were completely absent from the area, even according to Fiensy.⁹¹ James Dunn opines that, on the one hand,

86 Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 255–261; Dillon, “Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom,” 605–627. It seems best to think that the saying was originally directed to the disciples though not as a private teaching but rather something that the crowds would have been able to listen. This conclusion is not dependent on seeing Luke 12:22a εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς as original. Rather, it is probably Luke’s editorial gloss by which Luke meant to clarify the addressees of the saying.

87 Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 11–32; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*; K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus. Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998) 99–13; Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 202–221; John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of A Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 100–102, 124–224, 265–276.

88 Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics*, 219.

89 David A. Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean. Soundings in the First Century Life* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 25–83; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered. Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 293–325 (esp. 308–311 and 519–526); E. P. Sanders, “Jesus’ Galilee,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Heikki Räisänen* (ed. I. Dunderberg et al. Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3–41; Sean Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 93–208.

90 Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean*, 58.

91 Fiensy states concerning the Galilean rural people that their “socioeconomic standing . . . ranged from the comfortable . . . to the subsistence level . . . to the destitute” (*Jesus the Galilean*, 46).

“subsistence farmers were always in danger of running into debt” and that “small holders would often have to sell out and become tenant farmers and day-laborers, or worse”; on the other hand, “the incidence of crushing poverty was not substantial.”⁹²

The extent of the socio-economic burden of Galilee is difficult to establish, and since the focus here is not historical Jesus, a few comments will suffice. It seems that there is a difference between the above-mentioned views, and it does have some implications, particularly for the study of historical Jesus. Nevertheless, the debate seems to focus largely on the degree of socio-economic burden rather than its presence or absence. Based on the current scholarship, it is best to say that the socio-economic burden probably was considerable but not all encompassing, which is supported by the following arguments. For one, there is evidence that people felt the burden of debts and taxes in Judea,⁹³ which is indicated by the burning of debt records at the outset of the Jewish War (*War* 2.427; cf. 7.61) and repeated pleas for the reduction of taxes by Judeans and Syrians as described by Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.42; cf. 1.76).⁹⁴ Further, there is evidence for social banditry, as indicated by the overt revolts in 4 BCE, 6 CE, and 66 CE. At least this points to grave socio-economic dissatisfaction, even if one admits that the issue was not merely about economics but also about politics of self-governance.⁹⁵ The large-scale building projects by Herod the Great and Herod Antipas also seemed to have been extracted, at

92 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 311 similarly, Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean*, 50–59.

93 This does not indicate that the same thing happened in Galilee, since Judea and Galilee were separate political entities after Herod the Great. The exact nature and burden of taxes is vigorously debated. See especially, E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 146–169, and Fabian A. Udoh, *To Caesar What is Caesar's: Tribute, Taxes, and Imperial Administration in Early Roman Palestine, 63 B.C.E.–70 C.E.* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown Judaic Studies, 2005), both of whom see the taxes as less burdensome. See also Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics*, 137–144, 216–219, and Hanson and Oakmann, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 99–129, esp. 113–116, who emphasize their debilitating nature.

94 Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 15–25.

95 Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 280–297; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs*; K. C. Hanson, “Jesus and the Social Bandits,” in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (eds. W. Stegemann et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 283–300. At least some sections in Josephus link uprisings with Galilee, even before the tumultuous events surrounding the Jewish War (*Ant.* 18.4; 18.23). Fiensy dismisses the uprising in 4 BCE as “opportunism on the part of Judas” (cf. *War* 2.56; *Ant* 17.271–272) and allows no socio-economic upheavals prior to the Jewish War (*Jesus the Galilean*, 58). See also Udoh, *To Caesar What is Caesar's*, 113–241.

least partially, by burdening the peasants.⁹⁶ Finally, the evidence of the gospels supports the fact that a number of people were under socio-economic pressure (e.g. Matt 18:23–35; 5:25//Luke 12:58; 16:1–9; cf. Matt 6:11–12//Luke 11:3–4).⁹⁷ Having stated all this, it seems that archaeological evidence balances the above picture somewhat. According to Fiensy's survey of recent archaeological literature on Galilee, the houses excavated in various regions of Galilee ranged from modest to more finely constructed ones, and there is little evidence in skeletal remains for substantial malnutrition. There is also some evidence that small-scale industry was present in some Galilean villages.⁹⁸ Overall, regardless of the exact number of poor peasants in Jesus' Galilee, it seems probable that many could have identified with Jesus' teaching on anxiety and God's care in Luke 12:22–31. Yet, the teaching would have been particularly poignant to the disciples of Jesus.

The disciples lived an itinerant lifestyle and were totally dependent on people's generosity for their basic needs (Mark 1:16–20, 10:25; Luke 9:57–62/Matt 8:19–22; Luke 14:22/Matt 10:37).⁹⁹ It seems less likely that the saying was primarily meant for people in general;¹⁰⁰ rather, it was addressed to the disciples who had left everything and were dependent on God now for their basic necessities.¹⁰¹ Its purpose was to build the disciples' trust in God's fatherly care by contemplating the natural world, and focus on striving after God's rule rather than worry about the basic necessities of life.¹⁰² It is possible that the sayings of Jesus (Q12:22–31) were subsequently adopted into Q and functioned as an encouragement for early missionaries.¹⁰³

96 For Herod's massive building projects and its effects on rural population in Galilee, see Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics*, 128–157, 202–221. Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*, 310–311) also acknowledges the extent and effects of Herod's building projects, while Fiensy (*Jesus the Galilean*, 50–83) does not discuss the issue at all.

97 Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 25–32, 199–242.

98 Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean*, 50–59.

99 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 3, 41–74; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 19–203.

100 Robinson and Heil's argument leans to this direction ("Lilies of the Field," 1–25).

101 This does not exclude the fact that it would have resonated with the poor peasants in the audience. For them, however, it would have constituted an indirect challenge to discipleship rather than a general discourse on avoiding anxiety.

102 The context in Q (Q12:4–12), which is persecution of the disciples, supports this conclusion. This is true even if one thinks that the parable of the Rich Fool was part of the original Q collection (thus, e.g., Funk and Miller, *The Sayings Gospel Q*; Kloppenborg [*The Formation of Q*, 208–216] allows for this possibility as well).

103 Kloppenborg (*The Formation of Q*, 220–221) suggests that Q12:22b–31 was directed to missionaries, and somewhat later expanded to larger audience, who were in need of encouragement in the midst of lack.

In Luke's urban context, the basic idea of trust in God's care and provision no doubt would have remained; however, the section needs to be seen within its larger literary context. The repeated use of the words μεριμνάω (worry; 12:22, 25, 26; 12:11), μετεωρίζομαι (worry; 12:29), and φοβέω (fear; 12:32; 12:4, 5, 7) accentuate the theme of worry and anxiety. Thus, there is a key word linkage between the various sections within Luke 12. Jesus directs disciples to contemplate (κατανοέω 12:24, 27) God's care of the natural world by using the rabbinic lesser to greater argument. If God cares for the hungry and unclean ravens (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:9; Ps 147:9; Job 38:41; cf. 1 Kgs 17:4–16) that do not work or gather to their storehouses, God certainly provides the necessary nourishment for his disciples. And if God adorns the lilies of the field, He also provides clothing for the disciples. Negatively stated, worrying is useless (12:25) and indicates lack of faith (ὀλιγόπιστος 12:28). More importantly, striving after¹⁰⁴ and worrying about basic necessities is characteristic of the pagan outsiders (ἔθνη 12:29–30). On the contrary (πλὴν),¹⁰⁵ the disciples should seek God's kingdom (12:31), since He already knows their needs. If the main emphasis of vv. 22–26 is on the thrice repeated verb μεριμνάω (to worry),¹⁰⁶ vv. 29–31 balances this with three-fold use of the verb ζητέω (seek; or ἐπιζητέω [strive after] in v. 30).¹⁰⁷

In 32–34, the disciples are further exhorted not to fear due to the presence (or nearness) of the kingdom (6:20; cf. Dan 7:14, 27). They are the “little flock” (τὸ μικρόν ποίμνιον 12:32) or the small remnant of the covenant community (cf. Amos 7:2, 7; Jer 13:17, Zech 10:3) that is struggling under difficulties that stem from persecution (12:4–12)¹⁰⁸ and improper attitude in reference to God's provision and the in-breaking kingdom (12:12–34).¹⁰⁹

104 See Bultmann, *TDNT*: 589–593 explores the nuances of μεριμνάω but sees “self-concern in respect of future” as the main characteristic in the gospel passages at hand.

105 Here Luke's πλὴν (Luke 12:31) diverges from Q12:31 (and Matt 6:33 which has the adverb πρῶτον); Luke's version heightens the contrast between the seeking “all these things” and “seeking the kingdom.”

106 In v. 26, μεριμνάω is placed in an emphatic position.

107 Nolland (*Luke 9:21–18:34*, 693) rightly notes that the balance between μεριμνάω and ζητέω is incomplete.

108 Here there is no doubt a reference to the early Christian community as well.

109 The terminology itself does not necessarily presuppose a context of persecution (contra Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 157); however, taken together with 12:4–12, it seems likely. Cf. Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*. (*Lc 9:51–14:35*), 382–383; Nicholas T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 169.

There is a clear connection between 12:13–21 and 12:22–34, which John Gillman calls “the misguided search for life’s security.”¹¹⁰ Whereas the parable warns about misplaced trust in the seemingly endless stockpiles of food,¹¹¹ the following saying points out the futility of the disciples’ misguided search for security in the midst of want.¹¹² Instead, they are to fearlessly let go of their possessions by giving alms (δότε ἐλεημοσύνην) and thus to store up treasures in heaven since it is the only way to have any security in the first place (contra the Rich Fool in 12:18, 21).

Perhaps the most peculiar section in the anxiety discourse is the command πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα . . . δότε ἐλεημοσύνην (sell your possessions . . . give alms; 12:33a). The section is addressed to the disciples, who had already left everything to follow Jesus (5:11, 5:27, 8:1, 9:1–3, 10:4).¹¹³ How can they now be asked to give up their possessions? Is it a reference to the common purse (cf. John 12:6) or perhaps addressed to the Christian community (cf. Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2:10; 6:9–10)? The most common solution is to assume that Luke here is addressing wealthy members in his audience.¹¹⁴ It is further supported by its connection to the previous parable (esp. 12:21).¹¹⁵ The immediate context, however, which talks about the insignificant “little flock” (12:32),¹¹⁶ the saying

110 John Gillman *Possessions and the Life of Faith: A Reading of Luke–Acts* (Zacchaeus Studies New Testament) (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 74.

111 Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 139–143.

112 Rindge (*Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool*, 222) has demonstrated that discourse on worry and anxiety, especially as it relates to possessions and death, is also a well-known motif in both Jewish and Greco-Roman sapiential teaching (Sir 31:1–3, Lucian *Dial. Mort.* 16.4; Syriac Menander 385–393; Seneca *Ep.* 14.8, 42.7, 115.16, 119.15; papyrus Insinger 15.19).

113 And therefore the disciples presumably had nothing left to give. It is of course possible to think, as Evans does, that Luke’s narrative leaves open the possibility that the disciples had not left all of their possessions per se. They had just left their ordinary life and duties to follow Jesus. This would be then something akin to Levi who gives a banquet after having left “everything” (πάντα) in Luke 5:27–29. See Evans *Saint Luke* 531. However, Peter’s question in 18:28 makes it likely that the disciples had left everything (τὰ ἴδια) or at least the bulk of things, even within Luke’s narrative context.

114 Karris, “Poor and Rich,” 120; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 981–983; Goulder, *Luke*, 542; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 359; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 690–691; Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 383.

115 Thus, especially Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 147–157. It is interesting to speculate that if Luke 12:33a were indeed part of Q, why would have Matthew omitted the saying? Would that have been too radical of a saying for Matthew, and if so, is that somehow related to the social location of Matthew’s audience?

116 Similarly, Gary Stansell, “Gifts, Tributes, and Offerings,” in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (eds. W. Stegemann et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 34–364, esp. 362.

about the worry about the basic necessities of life (12:22–31), and the earlier sayings on persecution (12:4–12), seem to cast some doubt on this. Though it seems that 12:33 forms an *inclusio* with 12:15b,¹¹⁷ it does not solve the problem entirely. Other contextual indicators point to the fact that the section as a whole (12:22–34) was written for a mixed audience; that is, to those who were able to secure their basic survival and a bit more,¹¹⁸ as well as to those who were well off. The parable would have been then addressed more directly to these groups. In other words, Luke meant 12:33a as part of his conclusion here to the section about possessions.

But how is one to understand *πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην* (sell your possessions and give alms; 12:33a)? Does it indicate a complete renunciation of all possessions,¹¹⁹ or is it better to see as a generalized exhortation about giving to the poor?¹²⁰ In the latter case, scholars would then understand it to point to “the relative value of material possessions and about securing treasures in heaven”¹²¹ or as a general command to almsgiving and helping the poor.¹²² It seems difficult to deny the radical call for renunciation and almsgiving here. The imperative *πωλήσατε* (sell) with its direct object *τὰ ὑπάρχοντα* (the possessions) together with the adjectival pronoun *ὑμῶν* (your) is difficult to take in any other way. The second imperative (make; *ποιήσατε*) in the following line reinforces the command. The fact that the saying omits *τὰ πάντα* (everything; cf. 18:22) does not indicate a departure from the radical nature of giving.¹²³ David Seccombe thinks that it is inconceivable to think that

117 Stegman, “Reading Luke 12:13–34,” 350.

118 Though it is difficult to specify, a helpful category would be what Longenecker (*Remember the Poor*, 36–59) calls the Empire’s middling class.

119 So e.g. Evans, *Saint Luke*, 531; Sondra E. Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation. The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 63–64; Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 246–248; less clearly Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 982; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 696; Kalervo Salo, *Luukkaan teologian ydin. Luukkaan evankeliumin ja Apostolien tekujen pelastuskäsitys* (Helsinki: SESJ, 2003), 155; Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 383. Historical Jesus most likely called at least some of his closest followers to sell (or at least leave behind) their possessions.

120 So, e.g., Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 153–155; Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 143–145; Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 76–77; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 531–532.

121 Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 144.

122 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 531.

123 See also, Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 92–93. Contra Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 154. It must be added, that had Luke added *τὰ πάντα*, the saying would have been more emphatic.

Luke would have first sought to alleviate the disciples' anxieties (12:22–31) and immediately afterwards make a statement that could have generated "utmost anxiety" (12:33a).¹²⁴ Thus he paraphrases the saying as "[y]ou are free now to sell your possessions" to support the less radical nature of the passage.¹²⁵ Luke does, however, juxtapose "gift" and "demand" sayings with some frequency and intensity in other parts of the gospel (e.g. 5:29–31; 6:20–22, 27–36; 9:1–3, 23–27; 12:4–7). Further, the paraphrase above could equally be used to support the understanding of the saying as complete renunciation. That is, the disciples would now [i.e., having received the kingdom] be free to divest of their possessions, since they are free from anxiety, fear, and other hindrances.

As such, it seems that the section would have helped the hearers to "positively break free from the possessions"¹²⁶ and become "free for the new life of the kingdom."¹²⁷ Thus, it is not to be taken merely as an entry requirement, since the "little flock" has already been granted the kingdom (12:32).¹²⁸ Rather, it is an exhortation and challenge to "enter more fully into the freedom of complete trust."¹²⁹ The saying presupposes that the disciples will practice radical giving only if they have a proper view of material possessions, God's fatherly care, and they let go of fearful anxiety.¹³⁰ Thus, the section includes both a gift (kingdom) and an obligation (sell and give) and the two cannot be neatly separated from one another.¹³¹

In 12:33b, it states that the disciples are to store treasures in heaven instead of piling them up on earth. While a number of scholars understand "treasure in the heavens" to refer to the afterlife,¹³² it is possible to see that it includes a this-worldly dimension as well. Seccombe is probably right in saying that "treasure

124 Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 154.

125 Ibid., 154–155.

126 Ibid., 153–154.

127 Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 94.

128 εὐδόκησεν ὁ πατήρ . . . δοῦναι . . . τὴν βασιλείαν. The Greek text has the aorist (εὐδόκησεν) and refers to past action. The implication is then that the disciples have already been given the kingdom.

129 Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 153–154.

130 Similarly, Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 143–144.

131 Similarly, Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World*, 228.

132 See e.g., Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 532; Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 92–95; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 981–983; Nolland (*Luke 9:21–18:34*, 694–695) states that it refers to becoming valuable in God's eyes; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 494–495; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 2565–2575. Many commentators actually do not say much anything about this statement (see, e.g. Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 384–385).

in the heavens . . . does not mean a pile of goods waiting to be enjoyed . . . [in] heaven";¹³³ that is, in the afterlife. Heavens (οὐρανοῖς) is not to be taken merely as the otherworldly final destination of the disciples. Rather, it is the sphere and dwelling place of God that is present in the kingdom. Thus, θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (an unfailing treasure in heaven) means storing favor and blessing with God, and this with implications to this life as well as the next. This idea is similar to Jewish wisdom traditions in which God reciprocates the alms giver with blessings and favor (Tob 4:7, 12:12–14; Sir 29:9–13; cf. 35:2; Pss. Sol. 9:5).¹³⁴ Yet, the sayings in Jewish wisdom are generally less radical concerning possessions than here in Luke and often include more concrete benefits than Luke does (Prov 3:9–10; 10:2–5; 22:4; Wis 7:7–14; Tob 4:4–11; Sir 29:9–13).¹³⁵ Verse 34 concludes the section with a short wisdom proverb that also has parallels in the Greek literature (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.22.19).¹³⁶ The saying itself probably means that one's financial investments, or use of resources, indicate the true nature of one's heart.¹³⁷ That is, the disciples' use of possessions is a reflection of their innermost motivations. Any attraction apart from the kingdom, be it selfishly storing abundant provisions (12:12–21) or overtly worrying about the lack (12:22–32), is condemned and corrected.

As briefly mentioned earlier, Jesus' original audience probably would have consisted of his disciples and perhaps of some Galilean peasantry who happened to hear the message. Though the magnitude of poverty in Galilee (and Judea) of the time is open to scholarly discussion,¹³⁸ it seems that the disciples were living an itinerant lifestyle that made them particularly vulnerable and dependent on people's charity and good will. Yet, what would have the situation been like in an urban environment during Luke's time? And how would Luke's audience have heard the saying on anxiety and the kingdom?

As the text indicates, the section encourages the disciples not to worry about the basic necessities of life. It is clear that there were a number of people living close or just above subsistence level in the Roman Empire of the time,¹³⁹ and also in the area where Luke wrote the gospel. However, the magnitude of

¹³³ Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 155.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, 218–220.

¹³⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 983.

¹³⁷ Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 695.

¹³⁸ See the discussion above (196–199).

¹³⁹ Scheidel and Friesen, "The Size of the Economy," 61–91.

poverty and deprivation is difficult to establish.¹⁴⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, one should talk about an economic continuum rather than a strict dichotomy between the few wealthy elite and the poor masses.¹⁴¹

Though the ancient sources in general pay little attention to the poor or destitute, their presence is attested, often indirectly. Beggars were found roaming in the streets and temples; some faked illnesses, and parents are reported to have blinded children in hope of receiving a coin or a morsel.¹⁴² Early Christian and Jewish literature also testify to the presence of the poor and beggars (Acts 3:1–10; 6:1–6; 11:27–29; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2:10; Jam 2:2–6, 14–17; 5:1–5; *Did.* 3:5–8; 13:4), especially in urban settings. Morley states that the poor in the Roman Empire were particularly characterized by vulnerability, exclusion, and shame.¹⁴³ Vulnerability was especially accentuated during food shortages and famines.¹⁴⁴ After all, the poor were not the focus of food or social aid as such.¹⁴⁵ In case of a loss of crop, pestilence, natural disaster, political turmoil, or war, the already marginal subsistence was often stretched beyond breaking point. To this could be added vulnerability to accidents, crime, and diseases.¹⁴⁶ The poor were also effectively excluded from social and political life. They did not

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- 140 Compare the poverty scales of Scheidel and Friesen, “The Size of the Economy,” 61–91 and Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 36–59.
- 141 See especially Scheidel and Friesen, “The Size of the Economy,” 61–91; Atkins and Osborne, *Poverty in the Roman World*; Morley, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 21–39; Scheidel, “Stratification, Deprivation, and Quality of Life,” 40–59; Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60–82; Woolf, “Writing Poverty in Rome,” 83–99; Rathbone, “Poverty and Population,” 100–114; Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 323–361. See also, Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 19–107. For the older dichotomous view, see especially Alföldy, *Social History of Rome*, 94–156.
- 142 Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 61–71. Similar brutality is not unknown today as is portrayed in the famous movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. During my six-month stay in India in 2005, similar incidents were reported by local Christians in Mumbai and other parts of India.
- 143 Morley, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 32–36. Morley draws partially from present-day poverty studies to substantiate his conclusions. For his views on shame, he follows Rajni Kothari, *Poverty: Human Consciousness and the Amnesia of Development* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 1, in addition to ancient sources.
- 144 Peter Garnsey *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World. Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 32–37.
- 145 Scheidel, “Stratification, Deprivation, and Quality of Life,” 40–59; Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60–82; see also A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome. Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968), 62–115.
- 146 Morley, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 32–36.

have the means to participate in many activities of social life such as dinners, *collegia*, private bathhouses, and gymnasia, since all these required a surplus of income.¹⁴⁷ It was also nearly impossible for them to find a patron, since a beggar had nothing with which to reciprocate.¹⁴⁸ Finally, exclusion meant shame, not least because urban poverty was associated with rebellion, crime, and disease.¹⁴⁹

Despite their vulnerability and exclusion, there were means that enabled the poor to cope with the difficulties and vicissitudes of life to some extent. They were able to receive food aid whenever such occurred and was open to everybody.¹⁵⁰ This also included lowered prices for grain and corn whenever there were governmental subsidies. The problem was that sometimes these benefits were only extended to the citizens, a special group, or had other qualifications and restrictions.¹⁵¹ Though charitable giving that targeted the poorest sector of the society was largely absent in the Roman Empire of the time,¹⁵² especially among the elite,¹⁵³ lower strata seemed to have shared with

147 Ibid., 33–34.

148 Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. R. Horsley; Harrisburg, P.A.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 100–101; Garnsey and Saller *The Roman Society*, 151–156.

149 Morley, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 34–35. He adds a quote from Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.153–154: “There is nothing in the calamity of poverty that is harder to bear than the fact that it makes men ridiculous.” Juvenal is not talking here about beggars or even plebeian poor but rather of wealthier individuals who have fallen into economic hardship. However, the sense of shame should not be overlooked and probably applied to lower stratum as well to some extent.

150 Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 89–115; see also Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” 96–103.

151 Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 89–115; For example, during the Republic foreigners and slaves were at times expelled from Rome so as not receive the benefits. Philo states that city *aediles* had a habit of distributing corn and oil to the people (Philo *Legat.* 22).

152 Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60. It is important to note that *generosity* was practiced in large scale. However, this was rarely extended to the poor (Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 67).

153 Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60–67, esp. 65; Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 89–115; Longenecker (*Remember the Poor*, 80–85) wants to qualify this a bit more listing individuals, such as Publilius, stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus, and the geographer Strabo, who gave or observed giving to the poor. However, there is no denying that much of the elite giving went to their peers who had fallen on the hard times. In addition, euergetism was generally a means to boost one’s social prestige and status (Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 67–73).

the needy much more eagerly.¹⁵⁴ This was often due to pity, especially in the case of children.¹⁵⁵ During a food shortage or famine, many resorted to rioting or putting pressure on the governors and elite in one way or another.¹⁵⁶ Those who were able no doubt moved to other locales in search of “greener pastures.”¹⁵⁷

It is difficult to state to what extent Luke’s audience would have specifically identified with the disciples’ lack of basic needs in 12:22–31. If that were the case, however, the surrounding society would have been of little help to alleviate such worries. Quite the contrary, according to the text, it is τὰ ἔθνη (the nations) that are characterized by such worry (12:30).

Having said this, it is likely that the disciples would not have been identified as ordinary beggars in the text since the narrative portrays them as disciples of Jesus. Rather, they probably would have been perceived akin to wandering cynic philosophers or priests of a Cybele cult who lived on the good will of the people.¹⁵⁸ As such, they were beggars, though with religious legitimation and thus somewhat higher social status. Luke’s audience would have been familiar with the travelling teachers, since the early Christian communities included these, some (or perhaps most) of whom were wholly dependent on the people’s generosity (Phil 4:10–19; 2 John 7–11; 3 John 5–9; *Did.* 11:1–13:7).

The preceding parable encourages readers to let go of πλεονεξία (covetousness) and store treasures with God by practicing radical giving and solidarity with the poor (12:12–21, 33–34). It is possible that the intention to build better and larger storehouses (cf. 12:18), and thus find security and ease (cf. 12:19), would be something that those who desired upward social mobility might identify with (PS4–5 in Friesen’s scale). Though according to Peter Garnsey it was both the wealthy and the poor¹⁵⁹ who stored food to secure their future, there was a marked difference in terms of quantity and quality of the items and facilities.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Luke could be warning the upward mobile middling class (PS4) to store treasures with God by giving alms instead of securing their own future. After all, according to the text, true security lies with God (12:21, 34).

154 Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60–82.

155 Ibid.

156 Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*; Morley, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 31–33.

157 Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 29–31.

158 Cf. Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 66–68. See also, Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (trans. B. McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 377–385.

159 Garnsey does not qualify his statements by indicating different levels of poverty.

160 Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 53–55.

The poorer members in the audience should not worry but rather focus on God's care and let go of fear (12:22–32). Thus, solidarity between the poor (PS6–5) and middling income (PS4; and a few wealthy, PS3) members constitute an essential requirement of the radical wisdom of the kingdom. It is possible to see that the contents of the Rich Fool's storehouse¹⁶¹ were intended to be redistributed to the poorer members in the audience (and perhaps even outsiders), which would have been a form of communal sharing.¹⁶² This then would have alleviated the disciples' anxieties and worries and paved ways for the non-poor to store treasure with God and be wise instead of fools (cf. 12:20). The audience as a whole is called to a proper orientation to material goods. They are not to be stored and hoarded, but neither are the disciples to worry over the basic necessities of life, despite the fact that the present realities and their life circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. As long as proper perspective is maintained; that is, God's rule is sought and communal solidarity is practiced, God's favor will rest on them. Then the poor disciples will have no need to worry, and those financially better off will rest assured that they will not be called fools. This undoubtedly would have challenged the socio-economic structure of the community and, if practiced, would have led them to adopt a form of communalism that is depicted in the early chapters of Acts (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37).

4.3 Toward a Critical Dialogue—Reading Luke 12:22–34 across Contexts

So far, the present-day reading of the Bolivian groups and the historical reconstruction of Luke 12:22–34 have been kept separate, but in this section, I attempt to find points of contact between the readings. I will employ a similar procedure as in the previous chapter; that is, I aim to investigate whether historical readings and present-day interpretation of Bolivian ordinary readers can illuminate each other and potentially lead to new insights, and how the purpose and method affect the interpretative results.

It is clear that the scholarly approaches and the readings of the Bolivian groups used significantly different methods. Biblical scholarship that employs

161 And by implication the inheritance of the previous saying (12:13–15).

162 Green (*The Gospel of Luke*, 484–495) sees a reference here to the breakdown of patron client relationships. While this seems to be the case in Luke 14:12–14, it is more difficult to see it here even if the implication of the passage points to that direction.

tools of the historical-critical method generally focuses on the varying layers of the text. Those that emphasize literary approaches tend to investigate the section's literary forms and connection to the larger narrative. As was seen, I employed these methods to some extent in the historical reading; however, as was the case in the analysis of the previous chapter (Luke 6:20–26), the Bolivian groups showed no interest in the historical context or circumstances of the text. Literary aspects seemed to be more important, and as such there were two distinct aspects that helped the Bolivian ordinary readers decipher the text and their own reality. These are the rabbinic lesser-to-greater argument (“how much more”) and intertextuality. Of course, neither group consciously picked these approaches out of various possibilities or applied them systematically.¹⁶³ Rather, they were tools that both groups had received from their own tradition of Bible reading within their respective communities.

The lesser-to-greater argument probably was used because it is dominant in the text itself. In this example, if God feeds the birds, surely He will feed the disciples. In another example, Daniel stated that if God provides all the needs of the birds and flowers, how much more would God provide for the needs of His children? This notion was not employed simply at the level of individual text segments but was extended to a general argument throughout the reading. Thus, the “how much more” argument was connected more broadly to a general theological idea of God's goodness and fatherly care. This in turn led to differing interpretations regarding the exact nature of God's provision in each group.

As indicated earlier, intertextuality came across in both explicit references and many allusions throughout the reading. At the simplest level, Matthew's “and His righteousness” (Matt 6:33) was combined with Luke 12:31. At other times, concepts like Solomon's wisdom and riches or the observation of the ant were used to illuminate certain sections in Luke 12:22–34 or a given theological/practical issue. This was sometimes done rather creatively. For example, Daniel juxtaposed the observation of the birds (and lilies) in 12:24–28 with that of the ant and sloth. This reading of the text then illustrated God's care of the church's community and the value of human beings. The selection of the ant and sloth for this purpose seems at first somewhat contradictory. After all, the ant is an example of industry in Proverbs 6:6–8 and 30:24–25, whereas the sloth is the epitome of inactivity in eastern Bolivia culturally and

163 The groups would not recognize the concepts as such either.

biologically in the animal world.¹⁶⁴ Of the biblical scholars, John Healey has noted precisely this tension between Jewish wisdom tradition in Proverbs 6:6–8, 30:24–25 and Luke 12:22–32//Matt 6:25–34, as well as the notion that the inactivity of the natural world is present in the gospel passages. He suggests that (partial) solution is found in the problems surrounding the transmission of the text. Thus, during the transmission and translation of the text, the MT קֶצֶן (chief, ruler) was mistaken for קֶצִיר (harvest) in the LXX,¹⁶⁵ the Aramaic Targums, and Peshitta. This would give the reading “without any harvest” instead of “without any chief” in Prov 6:6–8.¹⁶⁶ Healey then posits that since this reading was known in Jesus’ time per the above-mentioned textual versions, Matthew and Luke, respectively, would have used it. While this may be a possible direction toward a solution, it is also interesting to note a rather different reading of the text by Daniel.

Of course, Daniel’s reading does not attempt to solve the dilemma that biblical scholars have pondered. He is more interested in making sense of the text from his own perspective. To that end, his use of intertextuality combines the biblical wisdom tradition and the natural world of his cultural context. Overall, his argument seems to function at the higher level of abstraction than it first appears; that is, both ant and sloth are representatives of the natural world and the “character quality” of neither animal, be it industry or laziness, is the point in his argument. The point is rather on God’s care of human beings by using the “how much more” argument in the text and then further emphasizing the point with the ant and sloth. Daniel’s comment is rather obvious on another level. The ant, and the observation of the natural world, is linked to the biblical wisdom tradition, and thus finds echoes in Luke 12:22–34. The sloth, on the other hand, is an apt symbol of the cultural and natural environment of eastern Bolivia. Thus, biblical and local Bolivian realities fuse and reinforce each other in Daniel’s reading without further differentiation between the two. Regarding

164 On the sedentary lifestyle of the sloths, see <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/three-toed-sloth/>, which states succinctly that “[t]he sloth is the world’s slowest mammal, so sedentary that algae grows on its furry coat.”

165 The LXX text of Prov 6:7 reads ἐκείνῳ γεωργίου μὴ ὑπαρχόντος μηδὲ τὸν ἀναγκαζόντα ἔχων μηδὲ ὑπὸ δεσπότην ὦν.

166 J. F. Healey, “Critical Note. Models of Behavior: Matt 6:26 (//Luke 12:24), and Prov 6:6–8,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 497–498. Healey acknowledges that this does not remove all of the difficulties. For example, though Prov 6:7 reads ἐκείνῳ γεωργίου μὴ ὑπαρχόντος μηδὲ τὸν ἀναγκαζόντα ἔχων μηδὲ ὑπὸ δεσπότην ὦν, the following verse (6:8) does indicate that the ant still gathers its harvest in the summer (Healey, “Critical Note,” 498). To this could be added that the overall context emphasizes the industry of the ant and warns against sluggishness.

Healey's comments about the tension between biblical wisdom tradition and Luke 12:22–34/Matt 6:25–34, one could simply ask whether the author(s) of the gospels (or Jesus) felt a need to stick as close to the Proverbs passage or its ideas as Healey has assumed. After all, biblical wisdom tradition is rather flexible in many respects and the point of the gospel passages is God's provision and care of the disciples, not industry as such.

As noted earlier, the historical-critical scholarship at times has obsessed over finding the most authentic words of Jesus (*ipsissima verba*).¹⁶⁷ As such, it seeks to reconstruct the world behind the text, as I did to some extent in my historical reading. Though this is a legitimate scholarly enterprise, every reconstruction remains just that, a reconstruction. The Bolivian ordinary readers, however, used their own context and life circumstances to "reconstruct" the text and its message. For example, as indicated, scholars have pondered the meaning of Luke 12:33 and many have concluded that it was written specifically for Luke's wealthy readers. While this may be the case, though I partially departed from the idea, the Bolivian groups' readings took a different tack. The MG was quite happy to comment on the section, and their readings varied from total dispossession to setting priorities. The PG, on the other hand, chose to ignore the section almost entirely and focused mainly on 12:34 and the importance of the attitude of the heart, or the person's mindset. In a sense, the PG chose to read the text through Matthew's version, since they repeatedly added "and His righteousness" (e.g. *pastora*) and neglected vv. 32–34 almost completely.

If one takes a clue from the social location of the Bolivian readers, it is possible to challenge the common scholarly reading. The fact that privileged readers (PG) were unwilling to comment on the hard saying, "sell your possessions," points to the direction that Luke's audience might not have been as wealthy as has often been posited. Rather, in this reading, in addition to some wealthy individuals, it would have included a significant portion from the lower socio-economic spectrum (PS5–6), and also perhaps persons from the middling level (PS4) as I suggested earlier; in other words, a group that had something to sell and give away even if that was much less than the few wealthy (PS3).¹⁶⁸ Further, it would be difficult to say that the Bolivian MG

167 For example, the "Five Gospels" text compilation (Rober W. Funk, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for Authentic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993); and, to a lesser extent, Meier's massive historical-critical investigation project on the historical Jesus, *A Marginal Jew*.

168 This is the reading I suggested earlier as well. My historical reading and positing of this alternative was precisely influenced by the Bolivian groups' views of the passage.

was an upwardly mobile community even though some gave a testimony of God's provision (see the comments of Rosa and Pablo above) and the desire of many for such mobility. At the same time, at least some of the MG members had experienced worry over the basic necessities of life. Yet, they did practice sharing and generosity individually and communally, both within and beyond their circle of fellow believers. As such, the MG found the passage challenging (esp. 12:33), though less difficult to comment and appropriate than the PG. In light of the MG's reading of the passage, it would be possible to imagine that Luke wrote to a group that was similar in its outlook. That is, to a group of which at least some were struggling with the basic needs but in which many were giving and sharing since they had something rather than nothing; it is difficult to deny the presence of some wealthier individuals as well. Having indicated this reading, it must be kept in mind that this is just one alternative reading; however, it does find somewhat surprising support within the readings of the two Bolivians groups' interpretations.¹⁶⁹

Finally, both Bolivian groups focused on issues that were relevant to their own social location and socio-religious interests. With the exception of God's goodness, the key areas that both groups emphasized, such as the importance of active faith, this-worldly rewards, and the action-consequence theology, are almost completely absent from the scholarly discussions of the passage. This is partly because of the differing interpretative space, social locations, and cultures between Western biblical scholars and Bolivian ordinary readers, but it was also due to the lack of scholarly interest in the ordinary readers' questions and concerns in general.¹⁷⁰ For many scholars, interpretation of biblical texts is an academic and professional exercise that does not have a bearing on daily life and even less on survival.¹⁷¹ For both Bolivian groups, however, the texts seemed to have a direct connection to life, and the questions and concerns that they found were important. For many in the MG group who struggled in or just above poverty, strong faith and communal solidarity were non-negotiable

169 It would be possible to draw different (or no) conclusions from the Bolivian groups' readings as well. For example, one could argue that the fact that the PG was unwilling to comment on "sell your possessions" would be analogous to what Luke would have anticipated from his rich audience; that is, resistance. Thus, he deliberately wanted to challenge the wealthy in his audience to share their wealth with the poor. This would then follow the general scholarly reading of the passage.

170 The groups' Pentecostal worldview and religious experience adds to this fact, since most biblical scholars come from non-Pentecostal background or self-identify as such.

171 This is not to say that scholars do not have a vested interest in their interpretations of the text.

aspects of survival. The reading of the text also prompted some brief critiques of their society's unequal socio-economic arrangements.¹⁷² Though it was formulated in the form of sarcasm, it led to a reflection on the possibilities of upward mobility. In light of this, it does not seem far-fetched to think that a statement, "sell your possessions and give to the poor" (or like), would have been heard as a critique and challenge to existing communal life and even the social order during Luke's time. This would have been even more so since it was connected to God's kingly rule. Similarly, despite its logical potential to the contrary, action-consequence theology seems to be largely a positive factor within the MG. At the very least, it encouraged sharing of resources and mutual aid within the community. In addition, according to Pablo's and Rosa's comments, it prompted generosity even to those who practiced a lifestyle that was contrary to the values of the Pentecostal community. In the PG, action-consequence theology elicited comments that reflect prosperity theology; however, it encouraged giving and generosity as well, though the recipients of this generosity were not detailed.

On a strict historical or even literary reading, it is not obvious that Luke 12:22–34 would prompt comments on action-consequence theology or this-worldly rewards.¹⁷³ The Bolivian readers, however, found it in the text even though their reading no doubt was influenced by their ecclesial tradition, including their reading of biblical wisdom tradition. As such, most scholars would not see any trace of action-consequence theology or Deuteronomistic ideas in the passage, and only a few have attempted to find this-worldly benefits in it. This is somewhat strange, since many recognize the characteristic wisdom genre of the saying. Yet, the Bolivian readers connected the action of "seeking the kingdom" and the positive consequence of "these things will be given to you" rather directly. At the same time, they did not limit "these things" to mere food and clothing but rather saw them as examples or

172 As discussed earlier, there seemed to be two different opinions in MG. Some joined *pastora's* critique of high society (e.g., Daniel, Juana) and seemed to be rather pessimistic about upward mobility. The pastor seemed less critical and advocated strong faith as a means for upward mobility though he seemed to confess that it is rather an impossible feat after all.

173 Kloppenborg is one of the few scholars who make an explicit connection between the seeking Sophia-wisdom with its resulting rewards and seeking the kingdom (*Formation of Q*, 218–221). However, he does extend the rewards of seeking wisdom to the gospel passages. Evans (*Saint Luke*, 529) comments briefly that here sufficiency in the worldly things is not, unlike in the ethic of Deuteronomy, the reward of obedience to God; but rather it is an addendum to it.

symbols of God's care and provision. Moreover, as discussed earlier, the groups did not often follow the text strictly. Many times, they found an idea, key word, image, or principle that they lifted from the literary context and then applied to their own situation in light of their contextual and theological framework. It seems clear that scholarly readings and ordinary readings reconstruct both the text and its message based on what methods and interests guide their reading. Despite this, it also seems possible to find mutually enriching perspectives that may be beneficial, at least to some extent, to both.

Analysis of Ordinary and Scholarly Readings of Luke 14:12–14

This chapter focuses on Jesus' saying about banquet invitations in Luke 14:12–14. The format follows previous chapters—the first part presents the empirical material of the Bolivian groups and the second presents an historical reading of the same passage. Finally, the last section, I explore similarities, differences, and points of contact between the readings.

5.1 Empirical Reading of Luke 14:12–14¹

5.1.1 *Socio-Economically Marginalized Group's Reading of Luke 14:12–14*

5.1.1.1 Possessions and Social Status

The socio-economically marginalized group focused on the importance of giving and sharing regardless of one's socio-economic status or people's expectations.

Pastora: Not to offer to those who can give back... right, a favor... that we invite the poor, the blind, and those people who cannot give us back anything.

Marcos: We are to invite the neediest people. There are people who need clothes; there are others who need food and all those things.

Roxana: To the poor, the blind, the lame... the most needy ones... because they need help economically, physically, and spiritually.

The group also pointed out that people, including themselves, generally invite to parties and events only those who are within their own family, social network, and/or religious tradition.

1 During the reading of the passage, 14:1 was included to clarify that the saying of Jesus in 14:12–14 was conducted in the house of a leading Pharisee.

Maria: Generally we invite [for a dinner or party] those people that . . . we know . . . friends, parents, neighbors, and those who are in contact with us . . . because they are the people one is always with . . . one sees [things] with then, talks with them . . . and communicates with them.

Rosa: We invite the family and friends. Why? For respect and to share with them. And one excludes the enemies and the strangers because they look for errors in us.

Pastor: Let's say in a church's anniversary . . . normally one invites sister churches that have the same faith, same doctrine . . . and one excludes the prodigal son . . . like the older brother . . . the older did not want to come in.

According to the text, the Pharisees (cf. Luke 14:1) with whom Jesus was dining were seen as negative examples of sharing and discrimination.

Marcos: They were hypocrites . . . proud people who did not feel anything for other people. They only had contact with people of their own sort or let's say their own elite [circles].²

Marcos: Or a Pharisee was not able to help a poor person . . . he could not reach out to give a hug . . . for them it was a serious thing.

The group pointed that if people had listened to Jesus, there would not have been and would not be social class distinctions between people.

Maria: They [Pharisees] would have shared with everyone, not simply with the rich and poor but with everyone.

Rosa: There would not be [different] social statuses, let's say upper class and lower class and middle class . . . it would not be this way.

Some group members expressed that they feel excluded from the society due to socio-economic and religious reasons.

Maria: Sometimes one is invited [to a party] but one does not go.

² Pastor in another comment also stated that the Pharisees here are "governors."

Pastora: Even if they invite us many times one does not want to go when the invitation comes from the high society... because they say oh we [are] like this... they have a low concept of oneself... oneself.

Juana: Low self-esteem.

Pastor: The question of culture. Normally we say that Bolivia is a nation where the mother religion is Catholicism... the traditional religion is Catholicism... then, if I am not from Catholics and I am evangelical,³ other people reject... other people reject us... they do not speak, they separate, it is the devil, they marginalize you... even in school.

Maria: Sometimes also in the parties, there are weddings of relatives but as they are Catholics and they say that a person is [evangelical] Christian one does not go, one does not see. [It's] better we do not invite him.

The feelings became more clearly pronounced as the discussion proceeded further.

Pastor: For example... I have an engineer [as a friend] who has a lot of money and I am of little means... and he invites me to his party. I feel ashamed to go there.

Pastora: True... we exclude ourselves.

Pastor: I have a Korean friend⁴ who invited me to his birthday party... the brother has a lot of money... and he invited me to his birthday party... so what do I bring to him [as a gift]? What do I bring? You know what I brought him? A turkey [everybody laughs with the pastor]. And he liked the turkey [everybody laughs].

3 Evangelical Christians (Spanish, *evangélicos*), which generally includes moderate and conservative Protestant groups in Bolivia, often contrast themselves against Catholics. *Evangélicos* see themselves a minority and often feel discriminated and marginalized by the Catholic majority, as is seen in this comment.

4 It is unclear whether the "engineer friend" in the earlier line and the "Korean brother" thereafter are the same person and both refer to same situation. Based on my discussions with him, it seems that the pastor is talking about two distinct persons and occasions.

Marcos: Or how bad of the pastor...or how bad did they think of him...or how bad [he fares] economically.

Juana: One *peso* for the turkey.

Pastora: But for example...if we are invited to his birthday party...what can I bring to him...a quarter of a chicken? [Everybody laughs] A quarter of a chicken...that's all there is...that's all there is.

Juana: He already has everything.

Pastor: I would bring him *achachairu*.⁵

Apart from obvious socio-economic and class distinctions, the reluctance to go to the parties of the wealthy people seems to reflect the culture of reciprocity. This came across already in pastor's and *pastora*'s comments earlier. Later on, however, the pastor explicitly indicated that reciprocity is a strong culturally rooted custom in eastern Bolivia.

Pastor: Yes it is the culture here in *el Oriente*. For example, my mother sent me to my neighbor to give her a meal...and the recipient always came back with something...I never came back empty handed...with a banana, guava, apple or any other thing...then it was reciprocal...such is the culture.

As such, it is not difficult to see why the pastor and others found it difficult to attend birthday parties and bring gifts⁶ to people whom they considered wealthy.

5.1.1.2 Salvation and Benefit

As became clear already, the group placed considerable emphasis on sharing, regardless of social class or status. Though sharing was to be done without expecting reciprocity (ideally), it was connected to salvation and God's justice.

⁵ *Achachairu* is a common fruit in eastern Bolivia and costs about as much as one orange.

⁶ My impression was that birthdays are very important social gatherings in Santa Cruz. They demonstrate the social status of the person hosting the party and a lot of money is spent to entertain the guests.

Pastor: When you make a chicken . . . don't invite your parents but the needy, right? Then you are going to be rewarded because God is going to reward you. . . . Not only here we will be rewarded . . . and it says but that you will be rewarded in the resurrection of the just, so you will receive a reward there also . . . not only here.

Maria: Here it teaches us that . . . people have to share without consideration of the social class and one receives the reward . . . which is salvation.

Juana: Salvation is demonstrated by works also. Like she says, also inviting to eat, sharing a little of the word.

Marcos: There are people who need clothes; there are others who need food and all those things. And God is going to reward him because he is doing what is just.

The comments show the importance attached to the rewards for giving and to the way God rewards one's good deeds. This-worldly reward fits well with the idea of the reciprocity culture mentioned above. Theologically, the underlying assumption seems to be God's justice, as Marcos implied. The reward is also linked to salvation and the importance of demonstrating salvation by one's practical actions. Action-consequence theology is apparent as well being connected to the notion of reward for good works and God's justice, which implies that God reciprocates what the faithful give. Though the connection seems clear, the group does not spell out clearly the nature of rewards—except that the rewards are given in the here and now in addition to heaven, though the text appears to point to the rewards at the “resurrection of the just” (14:14).

The group was of the opinion that had people practiced this teaching of Jesus, life in the church, community, and society would be different.

Juana: There would be more believers . . . if we had done all of this . . . there would be more solidarity between us.

Pastor: I firmly believe [this] because we are practicing all of this in the church, right?⁷ I believe that there would be more forgiveness; I believe that there would be more reconciliation and there would be unity . . . within the church. That this costs our church, yes it does cost but

7 Pastor is referring here to the church's soup kitchen that hands out food to the people five days a week for a minimal price or for free to those who cannot afford to pay.

we are doing all this . . . and it seems that the fire [of revival] is kindling and nobody can distinguish it.

Maria: I believe that in the church . . . there would be harmony between brothers and sisters. . . . I believe that there would be more harmony and peace among them. And in the community also, let's say people would help each other. And the society itself would be more in solidarity with all of the social classes.

Thus, the group put a strong emphasis on the responsibility of people and communities to practice solidarity and sharing as a means to change things. Also, the reason for discrimination and inequality between social classes was attributed to the fact that people do not practice Jesus' teaching on sharing as taught in this passage.

Pastor: Why [is there no change]? The reason [is] we do not do what Jesus teaches us . . . things would change.

Maria: Apart from the [cultural] customs.

5.1.1.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As in the earlier readings, the interpretative horizons were fused without concern for possible differences between the historical context and readers' present-day contexts. This became clear when I asked questions that focused exclusively on the time and context of Jesus.⁸ As I did so, I received answers that mainly reflected the present-day situation of the readers. At times, there were comments that mixed freely the past and the present situation. Only on a few occasions did somebody relate a comment that was meant to reflect exclusively the past context in which the passage was originally written. When the comment reflected exclusively the historical context, the subject matter usually concerned the Pharisees or other characters or customs that were particular to the historical situation. Here are representative examples from all three categories:

Me: What would have happened in the time of Jesus if people had practiced this teaching of Jesus?

8 For pragmatic reasons, as I posed questions, I did not try to distinguish between the time of Jesus and Luke (or Q).

Maria: People would practice more solidarity . . . we would live together as brothers and sisters.

Juana: There would be more believers . . . if we would have done all this; there would be more solidarity among us.

Pastor: Verse fourteen; they will be blessed . . . that not only here we will be rewarded.

Marcos: What happens is that Pharisees . . . the Pharisees knew the word . . . they were studious and Jesus called to Pharisees because they studied the Law.

The focus of the reading is clearly the present-day situation of the community. There is little interest in extra-textual information about the Pharisees or meals in the biblical context. In the few comments about Pharisees, they were seen as proud, rich elite, and once as governors. This probably partially reflects Luke's textual horizon and the general ecclesiastical tradition of the Bolivian group. Nevertheless, one might see a connection between the status of the banquet hosting Pharisees and the wealthy "Korean brother," even if the latter was not deemed proud or uncaring *per se*.

Hermeneutically, the group members utilized the present-day situation as the extra-textual context from which to draw clues to the meaning of the text. This became apparent in the emphasis on the reciprocity, rewards, and God's justice. Particularly, the focus on the reciprocity that reflected the cultural customs of eastern Bolivia framed the reading of the text. It is clear, however, that it was not just the cultural custom(s) that influenced the reading but also the theological tradition of this-worldly rewards, particularly the action-consequence theology.⁹

As to the praxeological effects of the text, there were many types of suggestions for action. Some comments were general while others posed a concrete challenge to practice sharing. At other times, they reflected longings rather than pointed to particular actions.

9 It is difficult to evaluate to what extent culture and ecclesiastical tradition (or church affiliation) influence the interpretation. Though the two are obviously not mutually exclusive, the ecclesiastical tradition is often a more influential force than the culture (so, for example, de Wit, "Through the Eyes of Another," 44; cf. Village, *The Bible and Lay People*).

Maria: A message that is for us is [that] we have to share with all people who need.

Marcos: And God requires of these people and if we have never practiced solidarity, right? Try to help others and there is the reward . . . and not to ask anything in return.

Maria: The passage says that one needs to invite the poor because Jesus says so . . . the poor, the cripple, lame, and blind . . . And we need to help them.

As can be seen from Maria's second comment, sometimes the text was appropriated directly. Jesus says "invite the poor" in the text, so we need to "invite the poor" as well.¹⁰ At other times, the appropriation was less direct or more symbolical.

Perhaps more noteworthy than the details is the discussion that the text prompted. Many comments reflected longings to have a community that practiced solidarity and sharing. As the pastor mentioned, the small congregation did practice sharing in their soup kitchen, but clearly there was much room for improvement as many participants pointed out. The comments on birthday parties, gift giving, and reciprocity, however, indicated that the group members felt powerless to connect with the wealthy or even accept the kindness some rich people had presumably attempted to demonstrate. In this sense, the group's discussion addressed what it meant to be on the receiving end in the reciprocity culture in present-day Bolivia. The difficulties associated with sharing the same space and participating in the same socio-cultural functions with those who were considered "brothers" may also imply criticism of the ecclesiastic and societal arrangements and structures. At the very least, the laughter and implied sarcasm that accompanied the comments concerning gift giving indicated the near impossibility of crossing socio-economic boundaries and their powerlessness to do much about it. The conclusion of the group was that many preferred to exclude themselves from the parties rather than to submit to shame and ridicule. At the same time, the group dreamed about a church and society that practiced solidarity and reflected the teaching of Jesus in this passage.

10 Of course the concern, "we need to help them," is a much wider concept than merely to "invite them to dinner" that one could gather from the text. Nevertheless, Maria's comments are close to what Boff calls "correspondence of terms" approach (Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 142–153).

5.1.2 *Privileged Group's Reading of Luke 14:12–14*

5.1.2.1 Possessions and Social Status

The privileged group also stated that one of the important aspects of this passage was giving and sharing. The giving was to be directed to the needy with selfless motives. At different points in the discussion, the material and/or spiritual needs of people were emphasized. Nevertheless, often the actual material dimension of the sharing receded to a secondary place.

Carina: The crippled, the lame, the blind and in reality all the needy people and why? Because the reward is divine and comes from God.

Tania: The needy are the poor in spirit, to those who are ignorant of the word, and who have a great need . . . to receive.

Maria: It is spiritual; it could have been rich, crippled, lame, [and] blind. It talks about the spiritual poverty.

Carina: In addition, it says when you make a meal or a dinner; it does not talk about other things other than food. If we associate that the word is food, it talks about food not about giving other things. It does not talk about giving a coat or house or other things except food.

Also, an important discussion revolved around the motives of giving and the giver's attitude of the heart. This was also linked to the idea of rewards.

José: Why did Jesus do this? . . . the Lord says to you if you invite someone, this someone will give you in return; this is a good business deal. If we remain simply in the text, we say that Jesus says don't do this business deal, [but] do this other business deal. Look, invite these other people, the Lord is going to give you more in return . . . [I]t is a better business deal that God gives me, I make more money than the other. But on deeper level, it is not about who pays more . . . the reason why the Lord is saying this to you is that you would share.

Juanita: But it does talk about reward—

José: It does, it does.

Juanita: —and because that reward is greater due to love that Christ gives us, right? The objective is not to have more and more.

Ruben: I believe that it has to do with the disposition of the heart. If one really has sincerity, sincere love, the interest that one has . . . one does not expect a reward . . . I believe that the intention of Jesus was to demonstrate the heart that is first humble and then show a heart that is sincere to really invite truly the needy and that the reward is not really material.

José's comments emphasize the importance of not seeing Jesus' words in terms of business transactions but rather that the focus should be on disinterested sharing. Juanita insisted on rewards, while Ruben emphasized the attitude of the giver and spiritual rewards.

The privileged group also mentioned that people generally invite their own kind of people to banquets and social gatherings.

Juanita: One excludes the strangers . . . the enemies . . . ex-spouses and girlfriends [everybody laughs].

José: One invites those people with whom we feel comfortable, those people that we want to do business with sometimes and we exclude those who do not belong to our social circle.

Ruben: We look for [people who are in] the same social level as we [are], our people of influence around us in our lives, in our society; in addition, there is people with money, right? That is exactly where one looks for and those who one does not seek and invite and one excludes strangers around us and in our society if we do not want people that we do not know it costs us; let's say to be social and to have influence. Then, generally one excludes strangers, the socially inferiors, those from who one is unable to take benefits . . . it is not always but often one takes into account the appearance of people . . . because by nature one seeks the outward appearance and one seeks social interest, influence, power, [and] money.

Juanita: In conclusion it is the same thing as in the time of Jesus; it is exactly the same. The difference is that now we speak in a cellphone [everybody laughs].

It is easy to see the tension between the ideal and the practice. Though Ruben's comments here are general and descriptive, and perhaps also critical of the present practices, it does illustrate the gap between the earlier comments regarding the importance of inviting the needy people and the current practice.

It is also possible that the tendency to spiritualize the invitation reflects the attempt to bridge the gap between the ideal and actual practice. The practical difficulty of appropriating the teaching is illustrated by José's hypothetical invitation.

José: I am going to have a banquet . . . and I am going to invite you because we are friends. All of you but as a great idea I am also going to invite the drug users, street urchins from the canals—

Maria: I would not go to your banquet (everybody laughs).

José: —and now the other thing that I can do is that one that did not have time to take a bath [Laughter—participants are joking about the bad smell] . . . it is clear that this banquet is not going to happen because I am going to find an excuse not to go or have [it] because certainly there is a crook that is spying on my house; this is evident. We would say that there are practical situations in which we are not going to do this really. Except if I have [lots of] money and twenty servants well-dressed that help me and I invite twenty or forty beggars to show off my altruism and they take a photo of me; this is not what this is about.

Though the main emphasis was on the practical difficulties of arranging a banquet to the beggars and marginalized in the society, the comment also illustrates the difficulties of crossing social boundaries. As Maria indicated also, she dismissed the idea of attending immediately, and José would see the idea as a show off if it happened in the first place.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Maria commented that the teaching of Jesus would have had serious societal implications had people practiced it.

Maria: There would have been a social revolution . . . where there has been a manifestation of fraternal love, major equality where truly the needy have been supplied by those who have more in every respect, economically, socially, spiritually . . . really there would have been a social revolution.

Though Maria's comments referred specifically to the time of Jesus, it is easy to see the connection to the group's present-day situation in light of the previous discussion and the words "where there have been." The latter phrase clearly implies wider applicability of the idea.

Despite the fact that the group often emphasized spiritual giving, José pointed out the importance of social responsibility and concrete material giving.

There is a social responsibility that is interesting I think. The Lord is not saying look you are evil or ungrateful when you say because you have money. It is not like that. . . . It is saying to you that do not grab it [money], do not guard it so that soot starts to grow, moth . . . but do something good with it; take it and share what you have, half of what you have. So that is what you [should] do with what the Lord gives you and do something good with this.

José's comment of giving "half of what you have" is truly surprising in light of the comments from other group members that elicited the spiritualizing tendency. Nevertheless, it seems more like an ideal situation than a practical arrangement. Later on, Tania also gave an example of a group of wealthy people in another church who started a socio-spiritual program in an extremely poor *barrio* in Cochabamba (a city in the Andes region of Bolivia). It was perhaps meant as an illustration of what social responsibility might look like in practice.

5.1.2.2 Salvation and Benefit

The privileged group emphasized the rewards for giving and sharing:

Tania: But when you serve those that you do not know but who I understand as poor in spirit, they do not know the truth, they are blind, they walk in evil, they are lame, the reward will be, the reward of the resurrection, it says . . . the Lord will reward you.

Carina: The poor, cripple, lame, and blind because Lord expects that people will be blessed for what we give, in this manner the justice of the kingdom is perceived, and so also we are going to be rewarded.

As can be seen from Carina's comments, she perceives herself as a giver rather than a receiver; however, she also believes that the Lord will reward the giver in return. The same attitude to giving and rewards seems to be characteristic of the whole group.

The rewards include the life after death but they also have a this-worldly dimension. Though the nature of this-worldly rewards is not often spelled out concretely, the material and economic aspects are apparent.

Ruben: The reward is not just material, but it says your reward will be in the resurrection of the just.

José: In these attitudes the kingdom of heaven enlarges, because people are receiving freely . . . the Lord is saying be part of this, the propagation of the kingdom of heaven. You are going to receive, I think this is the objective that you are part of this, [that is] the propagation of the kingdom of heaven . . . you are going to receive your reward, everything that you want . . . Second, you are going to see that it grows in other ways that is not just money.

Both comments indicate the material nature of the rewards, and José points out that money is just one of the many benefits of sharing. As such, it is not surprising that money and material wealth were seen as something good that should be shared along with spiritual blessings.

José: There is someone that has more; he makes a meal or dinner because he has a bit more money. When you make the invitation to other people that is very well. It is good, very good to have money. It is a blessing of God.

The most intense and lengthy discussion¹¹ revolved around the motives of giving and the ensuing rewards.

José: But why did he [Jesus] give you this task of sharing? It is not to give you a reward; that is not the objective, the “why” for you to share . . . One, I believe is that the kingdom would spread that people would see the kingdom of heaven. It is interesting how when somebody has problems . . . and when you find someone that can help you in the needs, you find very great relief . . . in that moment you say Lord thank you . . . in this attitude the kingdom of heaven enlarges because you receive freely. The Lord is saying that [you] be part of this, the propagation of the kingdom of heaven . . . as a reward you will receive everything that you want . . . second . . . because the Lord commands you to be generous but if you see this coldly that it is commanding you to be generous because you are interested in other gain, [or it merely] causes gain. But it does not only cause gain, it is a matter of enlarging the kingdom. It is also the question that you change from within.

11 The lengthy quotes are just a part of the longer conversation.

Maria: But they will be rewarded [everybody starts discussing intensely] . . . obviously he obeyed out of love to Father and his neighbor but he was exalted . . . the reward went beyond what you could do, the addition[-al rewards].

Ruben: Exactly.

Maria: It is for love. It has to be out of love. Because if it is not this [kind of] service it is not genuine service . . . but it is inevitable because in spiritual laws it is inevitable. You sow and you reap, it is not like . . .

José: It is as you say but like Jesus said—was it because of love or because you wanted to be exalted?

Maria: It was for love and as a consequence exalted. Therefore it says do it for love and you are going to understand the consequences.

José: Hmm [skeptically].

It seems that José and Maria agree that rewards follow sharing; however, José criticized the kind of sharing that involved wrong motives and took the rewards for granted. He also pointed out that the object of sharing is spreading the kingdom. The idea of this-worldly rewards clearly was connected to one's action to the extent that Maria calls it a "spiritual law." This refers back to the notion of action-consequence theology mentioned earlier.

5.1.2.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

Though most of the time the group fused the past and present-day horizons, on a few occasions, distinction was made between historical and contemporary contexts. For example, Maria stated that there would have been a social revolution during the times of Jesus if people had practiced His teaching about the banquets. Nevertheless, on the whole, the focus was on the present-day realities of the community.

The idea of sharing and the resulting rewards constituted the hermeneutical focal points of the group's discussions. Sharing was understood as the command of Jesus and was to consist of both spiritual and material benefits to the needy. Often, the idea of sharing was generalized or spiritualized, though giving to the materially poor was foregrounded occasionally. Thus, the "poor, lame, crippled, and blind" were seen as the needy in general or

spiritually poor, or in more material terms, as economically poor.¹² Physical disabilities were not discussed, though the text seems to refer to people with disabilities as well.

The idea of rewards was understood as a direct result of sharing. Though the group engaged in an intense discussion on the motives of sharing, everyone agreed that God rewarded disinterested giving. This was clearly in line with the group's understanding of action-consequence theology.¹³ The notion of justice was occasionally connected to action-consequence theology, as Carina associated justice, giving, and rewards. The emphasis seemed to have been more on God who rewarded the giver according to "spiritual law of rewards" (e.g., Maria).

There were no new concrete praxeological effects that emerged from the reading; thus, the pattern was similar to the other readings. Group members encouraged one another to continue to trust God, practice evangelism, and demonstrate God's love to other people.

Nevertheless, several new ideas emerged that were unique to this discussion. José suggested that the message had an important societal dimension.

I believe that this is the "for what" the Lord is commanding you [spreading the kingdom] so that in your life . . . in summary counts to change this society, this generation, so that it would be transformed by the action of these people that does it.

Another point that was brought forward briefly was a project that engaged a poor community in the "red zone" of another city, which was seen as a great example of transformation of the society.

Tania: [In Cochabamba] it is a church of wealthy people but by the Lord it was led to a *barrio* that was practically the "red zone." There were bars that the thieves went to . . . to this *barrio* . . . the church went . . . to influence

12 Thus one could talk about a "spiritualizing strategy" in the privileged group's reading. That is, what seems to be a concrete reference in the text can be interpreted to have a spiritual connotation. This became clear when Carina equated concrete, edible "food" for spiritual nourishment of the word—"If we associate that the word is food, it talks about food not about giving other things."

13 It is perhaps noteworthy that the pastor and *pastora* were absent during this session. Still, the action-consequence theology came across strongly. It is possible though that the pastor's presence might have enhanced the spiritualizing effect of the reading.

the *barrio* and all. I have gone recently [there and] I have seen the change in the *barrio*. One sees the developments; one sees the people, marriages that have been reestablished . . . the *barrio* has been revolutionized.

Ester: It is incredible . . . there were husbands that were all day long in the bars . . . and the children were abandoned and when they went and told them that we are hungry [the parents say] we give you *chicha*.¹⁴ . . . Now [after their transformation] this is the couple that works with the children.

It is noteworthy that this example is brought to illustrate the social transformation. The practice of this church in Cochabamba was seen as unusual to wealthy people, however, which can be seen in light of the earlier discussion when José mentioned the hypothetical banquet that was deemed impractical due to the presence of the “street urchins.” In addition, Maria stated that each person has a specific ministry in which one engages; thus, not all are called to care for the poor and the needy.

There are different kinds of ministries. There are drug addicts that generally lead people who have been rehabilitated that have experience [in this] . . . those who have started these missions are people that have not been drug addicts [but] pastors, missionaries that have only responded to the love of God . . . I for example was rehabilitated in my soul. Then, I have a tendency to look for women that have a need to be rehabilitated in their soul . . . but who did I receive [it from]? First from a . . . pastor . . . who responded to the call of God and neighbor . . . that is how multiplication occurs . . . according to how one has been healed.

Finally, Tania told how this passage inspired her to imagine a network of connections that combined social media and mutual support.

I see a net;¹⁵ a vision of the net. Net is obviously associated with a fisherman but today it is also understood as connection . . . Like how you make connections with all the things you have. According to Peter for the benefit of the Lord, to establish a net[work]¹⁶ is a vision of this that the Lord

14 *Chicha* is a common name for a sweet corn drink that often has a high concentration of alcohol.

15 There is a word play here with the Spanish *red* [means both fishing net and network] and net.

16 Spanish *red* [network].

would want to make a net[work].¹⁷ More people would be refreshed and to make an analogy between [fishing] net¹⁸ and [inter] net¹⁹ . . . social networks in the internet and all.

As can be seen from the last comments, the appropriation of the text prompted creative responses that were far removed from the original context and ideas of the passage. As the text was left behind, multiple factors began to influence the appropriation of the text, ranging from individual preferences, church tradition, and socio-cultural and economic dimension.

5.1.3 *Comparison of Marginalized and Privileged Reading of Luke 14:12–14*

Once again, it is possible to detect that the socio-economic situation of the groups influencing the reading of the text. This became apparent in various ways, though most obviously in the forward dimension of the text. Both groups emphasized sharing, but the MG laid an almost exclusive emphasis on its concrete material aspect. The PG often, though not exclusively, spiritualized poverty and generalized the needy, whereas the poor in Luke 14:13 were understood as literally poor by the MG. Also, the MG mentioned the high social status of the Pharisee as a governor and member of the “elite.” The Pharisee was characterized as one who only socialized among one’s own kind and thereby excluded the poor. The PG largely ignored the Pharisee’s social status even if the Pharisees’ exclusive stance due to ritual purity was mentioned.

Both groups also focused on the rewards of giving and held that God recompenses the faithful giver. In this sense, the action-consequence theology was important to both groups; however, the MG’s application of action-consequence theology included a more explicit justice dimension. The PG saw God as rewarding the giver according to spiritual laws (Maria), which carried with it monetary and spiritual rewards (per José²⁰). The notion of justice is perhaps implied in the PG’s thinking to some extent, but “God’s goodness” perhaps would better characterize the group’s outlook.

The PG also spent considerable time discussing the motives of sharing. Overall, the perspective of the PG reflected the giver rather than the receiver. Compared to this, the MG saw themselves as receivers apart from the giving within their families and circle of friends, who mainly shared the same status.

17 Spanish *red.*

18 Ibid.

19 Spanish *net* [internet].

20 E.g., “Not only money”; “whatever you want.”

The food pantry of the church also engaged in small-scale distribution of food in the community.

The MG's reading of the text prompted a discussion on the marginalization and inequalities in their experience and, by implication, in society. The MG members expressed their perceived powerlessness to cross socio-economic boundaries, which came across in a simple invitation to a birthday party of a wealthy friend.²¹ Often, it was the surrounding society that marginalized them, while at other times they chose to self-marginalize rather than expose themselves to additional ridicule and shame. Even as the text prompted this discussion of shame and powerlessness, it also elicited a longing to see and create a just community and society. One cannot help but see this discussion, intended thus or not, as a critique of the unequal and unjust arrangements within churches and society.²²

The PG's discussion centered on the motives of sharing, and they perceived themselves to be givers rather than receivers. The group members understood the text to prompt sharing but the practical step in crossing social boundaries seemed almost insurmountable. There was also a perceived gap between the ideal of Jesus' command and the practical difficulties of appropriating the text, at least by those who took the text more literally. Though the hypothetical suggestion to invite the beggars to a banquet was rejected, José suggested that the text included an important societal message. Still, he was the only one, as was the case in the previous readings, to repeatedly point out the socio-economic implications of the texts. For Maria (PG), the socio-economic message seemed to be mainly "ministry to the drug addicts" and only to those individuals who were specifically called to it. As an example that the group used, "the Lord" specifically guided the church in Cochabamba to the poor *barrio*.²³

Once again, the two socio-economically distinct groups produced readings that included similar elements (e.g., giving and rewards) that reflected their respective circumstances. The PG saw themselves primarily as givers and this

21 It is unclear whether the two friends whom the pastor mentioned were more of the patron type or in some sense more equal. From the pastor's comments, it can be detected that at least he clearly felt distinctly inferior to his "friend."

22 This critique also targets the cultural system of reciprocity.

23 It is important to note that for Pentecostals almost anything can be perceived as "the leading of the Lord." In that sense, Maria's comments should not be pressed too far. The group's social location and the tone of the comment, however, seemed to imply that going to minister to a poor *barrio* was rather unusual. The church that the interviewees attended did not have an equivalent ministry at the time when I was visiting.

inevitably led them to ponder the motives and rewards of giving.²⁴ They also saw themselves as possible change agents in the society (esp. José). The MG read from the perspective of marginalization and exclusion and pointed out the insurmountable socio-economic barriers between social classes, even as it related to their Christian “brothers and sisters.” Despite their perceived inability to act as agents of change outside their small community, the MG entertained a vision of a just society with no distinctions of social classes.

Before exploring these ideas further, I present my historical reading of the same text (Luke 14:12–14) and then explore the relationship between the Bolivian ordinary readers’ interpretation and my own historical reading of the passage. The reading follows the same pattern as previous chapters.

5.2 Historical Readings of Luke 14:12–14

Few scholars have given special attention to this saying about banquet invitations.²⁵ It is generally treated as a prelude to the parable of the Great Dinner (14:15–24) and often interpreted together with the preceding sayings about the healing of the man with dropsy (14:1–6) and Jesus’ teaching on banquet seating (14:7–11).²⁶ As such, this arrangement is justifiable in light of scholarly views on the thematic unity of 14:1–24; however, this chapter emphasizes vv. 12–14 for two reasons. First, though the narrative context was taken into

24 Here one could also add the suggestion of utilizing social media to build connections. Though the MG group had access to the Internet through numerous (and cheap) Internet cafes, most did not own a computer and some did not know how to use one. This “digital divide” is a common disparity between the wealthy and the poor in many developing countries.

25 There are numerous articles and monographs about banquets and eating in Luke but I was able to find only one article specifically and exclusively about 14:12–14. This was written by a Latin American scholar René Krüger, “La inclusión de las personas excluidas. La propuesta contracultural de Lucas 14:12–14,” *Cuadernos de Teología XXIII* (2005): 67–88. Willi Braun, in *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS, 85; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 54–61, has a considerable section on 14:12–14, though his monograph focuses on 14:15–24.

26 E.g. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 2565–2909; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 539–562; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 9–21; Rober C. Tannehill, “The Lukan Discourse on Invitations (Luke 14:7–24),” in *The Four Gospels; Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (eds. F. van Segbroeck et al.; vol 11. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1603–1616; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 751; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 566–567; Timothy Noël, “The Parable of the Wedding Guest: A Narrative-Critical Interpretation,” *PRS* 16 (1989): 17–27; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 577–578.

consideration, the Bolivian readers focused on this short saying. Second, most scholarly readings have paid little attention to this section; thus, the emphasis would be justified on its own right. Due to the nature of this study, however, the latter point is less significant.

In this saying, Luke's Jesus addresses the host of the banquet and challenges him (and the hearers) to break with the standard socio-cultural meal customs.²⁷ The host is challenged to invite the poor and the sick in place of family, relatives, and rich neighbors. Finally, Jesus declares μακάριος (blessed) the person who heeds the teaching and promises that God reciprocates this ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν δικαίων (in the resurrection of the righteous).

As many scholars have pointed out, this saying is connected to the preceding sayings (14:1–6, 7–11) and the subsequent parable (14:15–24), the links of which are both thematic and linguistic. On the narrative level, the entire section (14:1–24) is a meal scene in the house of “a leader of the Pharisees” (14:1).²⁸ Thematically, the most obvious connection is the banqueting theme that runs through the episode, and narrative bridges presuppose a link to the previous sections. For example, the adjunctive καί (and/also) in 14:12a alludes back to πρὸς τοὺς κεκλημένους (to those who were invited) in 14:7a; ἀκούσας . . . ταῦτα (hearing . . . this; 14:15) and ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ (he said to him; 14:16) along with the following parable assumes linkage to the previous meal discussion (14:12–14).²⁹ The entire section is bound together by the key word καλέω (invite; 14:8–10, 12–13, 16–17, 24).³⁰ Finally, Luke's use of dining-room terminology³¹ and the list of the poor and marginalized (πτωχοὺς, ἀναπεῖρους, χωλοὺς, τυφλοὺς in 14:13

27 E.g. Tannehill, “The Lukan Discourse on Invitations,” 1603–1616; Krüger, “La inclusión de las personas excluidas,” 67–88.

28 In fact, the following section in 14:25 seems to start somewhat abruptly after the banquet scene.

29 Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 15–16.

30 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 581. In 14:7–24, καλέω is found eleven times. In addition, two closely related expressions φώνει (14:12) and εἰσάγαγε (14:21) are also used. See also Tannehill, “The Lukan Discourse on Invitations,” 1604–1609; Roth, *Blind, the Lame*, 179–180.

31 Braun (*Feasting and Social Reversal*, 17) lists the dining-room terminology as follows: φαγεῖν ἄρτον (14:1); τας πρωτοκλίσιαις (14:7); γάμους, κατακλιθῆς (14:8); ἀνάπεσε, ἔσχατον τόπον, πάντων τῶν συνανακειμένων σοι (14:10); ἄριστον ἢ δεῖπνον, δοχὴν (14:12–13); φάγεται ἄρτον (14:15); δεῖπνον μέγα; τῇ ᾠρᾷ τοῦ δεῖπνου (14:16–17); οὐδεὶς . . . γεύσεται μου τοῦ δεῖπνου (14:24). Braun also adds παραβολήν. This hardly fits Luke's definition or usage of the word apart from this passage (see 4:23, 5:36, 6:39, 8:4–11, 12:16, 41, 13:6, 15:3, 18:1, 9, 19:11, 20:9, 19, 21:29).

and 14:21) support the thematic unity of the section.³² It is possible though to see the following sayings (14:25–35) as connected to the meal scenes or separately as an extension of the previous unit. The better alternative is to see it as a separate comment to the crowd that follows Jesus' words on the same topic addressed in the previous section.³³ Even if the connection to the banqueting scene is generally abrupt, the thematic connection is apparent. That is, possessions and family ties cannot take precedence over following Jesus and entering the kingdom of God. Finally, in the larger Lucan context, the section 14:1–24 harks also back to the Sabbath healing controversies (13:10–17; cf. 6:1–11) as well as to the previous meal scenes (5:29–32; 11:37–41).

The section 14:12–14 elicits important structural features that connect it to the previous saying about status seeking during the banquet (14:7–11). There is a formal parallelism and progression that may be detected between the sections.³⁴ Just as Jesus addressed the guests not to seek honor for self by striving for πρωτοκλισίας (places of honor), in 14:12–14 Jesus urges the host not to seek honor by inviting to the banquet those who can reciprocate.³⁵ There is also an emphatic use of μὴ φώνει... μὴδὲ... μὴδὲ... μὴδὲ... μὴποτε³⁶ (do not invite... nor... nor... nor... so that) followed by the contrasting ἀλλ' (but) that indicates a stark choice between the types of guests one is to invite.³⁷

The tradition and authenticity of the saying is difficult to assess. Some scholars see 14:12–14 as a purely Lucan creation,³⁸ while others are more confident

32 For additional connecting links between the sections, see Noël, "The Parable of the Wedding Guest," 19–22.

33 Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 2765–2908.

34 In addition to the ones mentioned above, ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς... // ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ τῷ... (14:7//14:12); ὅταν κληθῇς... μὴ... μὴποτε // ὅταν ποιῇς... μὴ... μὴποτε (14:8//14:12); this is followed by contrasting ἀλλ' ὅταν κληθῇς... // ἀλλ' ὅταν δοχὴν ποιῇς (14:10//14:13).

35 Heil, *The Meal Scenes*, 104–105.

36 The construction of μὴ + present active imperative (μὴ φώνει) may also convey the idea of cessation of progressive action (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996], 724). This could be paraphrased as "stop inviting," however, the premise that μὴ + present active imperative convey cessation of continuous action is contested (see Robert Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 314–317; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 724–725). The context here would seem to favor this.

37 Similar contrast is probably also alluded to in the way the host changes his attitude in the latter part of the following parable (14:15–20 contra 14:21–24).

38 Bultmann, *The History of synoptic Tradition*, 103, 202–203, 334–335; Goulder, *Luke*, 585–588; Braun (*Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 54–61) seems to think that 14:12–14 is a Lucan creation (pace 14:7–11) though he does not clearly state so. He reads the saying mainly in connection with Lucian's writings (esp. *Cat.*, *Gall.*, and *Dial. Mort.*) and sees

that it is derived from pre-Lucan tradition (L) or even goes back to historical Jesus.³⁹ Arguments in favor of Luke's creation are the following: First, the parallelism between 14:7–11 and 14:12–14, as well as the catchword links to 14:21, point to Lucan editing. Second, typical Lucan vocabulary is present even if it is not spread throughout the saying.⁴⁰ Third, the message of radical sharing and breaking of social boundaries is a familiar Lucan theme (e.g. 1:46–56; 4:16–21; 5:1–11, 27–32; 6:20–26, 30–36; 7:22, 33–34; 10:30–37; 12:33–34; 16:19–31). Despite these factors, there are arguments that give some credence that the saying, or at least its general idea, is traditional or even goes back to historical Jesus.

First, it seems that Luke has retained Jesus' radical stance on possessions, at least in some sayings (e.g. 1:53; 6:20–26; 16:19–31).⁴¹ Thus, though sharing of possessions is a Lucan theme, it is also something that Jesus advocated during his earthly ministry—even if the rich failed to heed Jesus' words (cf. Mark 10:25 and par.). It was not meant to be taken just as an ideal but reflects the actual practice among some of Jesus' disciples. The criticism of the wealthy probably led to conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders of the time.⁴² Second, it is unlikely that the early Christians would have created the tradition of Jesus who openly shared a table fellowship with ill-reputed people. Thus, the message of radical sharing and breaking of social boundaries was most likely an important aspect of Jesus' ministry and Luke incorporated it into his gospel.⁴³ Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the saying was part of traditional material and perhaps goes back to historical Jesus even if Luke

"a dense solidarity" between Luke 14:12–14 and Lucian. He seems to be inspired largely by Ronald F. Hock, "Lazarus and Micallus: Greco-Roman Backgrounds to Luke 16:19–31," *JBL* 106:3 (1987): 447–463.

39 E.g. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 583; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 750; Plummer (*A Critical and Exegetical*, 353) states that the saying probably goes back to some source unknown to Matthew and Luke. James D. G. Dunn ("Jesus, Table-Fellowship, and Qumran," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. J. Chalesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1992], 254–272; cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 604–605) opines that 14:13 goes back to Jesus as a response to a stance similar to that of the Qumran community who excluded ἀναπείρους, χωλούς, τυφλοὺς from their table fellowship (e.g. 1QSa 2.3–10; 1QM 7.4–6; 4QCD^b; cf. Lev 21:17–24).

40 Typical Lucan vocabulary include for example φίλος, συγγενής, πλούσιος; *hapax legomenoi* ἀντικαλεῖν, ἀνταπόδομα (Goulder, *Luke*, 588).

41 Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Remembered*, 202.

42 Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants*, 84–97, 11–39, 199–242; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 202.

43 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 519–541, 599–611; Scott S. Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus and Honor Reversal at the Table," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (eds. W. Stegemann et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 175–183; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 261–264.

has given the saying its final form. It seems that at least the content of the saying fits well the stance of Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, as a whole, 14:1–24 is probably Luke's creation from traditional materials, as can be seen from the links between Luke 14:11 and 18:14 (cf. Matt 23:12) as well as the linking verses, such as 14:15. Since the focus is not on the tradition or history of the saying, the issue need not be discussed further.

In order to understand the final form of the saying, it is important to focus on two related issues. First, what is the meaning of the saying in light of the surrounding narrative? After all, it was mentioned earlier that 14:1–24 is a unified narrative with clear links and connections. Second, what socio-cultural assumptions lie beneath the text that Luke's audience would have perceived? Regarding Luke's audience, once again the focus is on the socio-economic realities and God's salvation/benefit; these two issues are treated together.

Many scholars have wondered about the meaning and function of ὑδρωπικός (person with dropsy) in the opening scene (14:1–6).⁴⁴ The story has affinities with the earlier meal scenes and Sabbath healings (5:27–39; 7:36–50; 11:37–54; 14:31–37; 16:6–11; 13:10–17) and follows similar patterns as the earlier scenes (esp. 13:10–17). The healing and Sabbath controversies, however, seem to recede to the background rather quickly. After a short justification for the healing that is reminiscent of 13:15, the scene changes to the teaching about choosing seats in a banquet (14:7–11). There is some evidence that the disease of dropsy was considered a punishment from God;⁴⁵ however, the context does not support this interpretation.⁴⁶ Thus, it is better to see that the disease functions here as a parable of insatiable greed.⁴⁷ Dropsy as a condition refers to the inordinate swelling of the body due to an excess of fluid. It is not a disease but rather a malfunctioning of the body.⁴⁸ Many ancient authors used dropsy as a metaphor for greed and avarice. That is, as the ὑδρωπικός (person with dropsy)

44 E.g. Heil, *The Meal Scenes*, 99–102; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 544–547; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 26–42;

45 See, for example, Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 354. He refers to Num 5:21–22 and Ps 109:18; however, the reference to dropsy is far from being clear.

46 Many scholars have also wondered how the ὑδρωπικός ended up in the Pharisee's banquet. For the various options, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1041; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 40–41.

47 Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 33–42. Goulder's (*Luke*, 584) argument that the healing of the man with dropsy was drawn from Matt 12 and is an interplay with excess dryness of the pit and the extreme wetness of the ὑδρωπικός does not convince. It is of course true that the context does not explicitly spell out Braun's interpretation either.

48 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:271; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 546; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1041.

craves water despite being saturated with excess fluid; likewise, the greedy person never has enough, be it possessions, honor or fame.⁴⁹ For example, Ovid in *Fasti* 1.215–216 states:

So he whose belly swells with dropsy, the more he drinks, the thirstier he grows. Nowadays nothing but money counts: fortune brings honors, friendships; the poor man everywhere lies low.

Thus Luke wanted to “exploit the symbolic and rhetorical value of the disease’s paradoxical symptom.”⁵⁰ Pharisees, who are later called φιλάργυροι (lovers of money; 16:14), are portrayed as having a similar problem of insatiable greed; that is, greed for status and possessions, as the following scenes imply (14:7–24). Here, Lucan Jesus is exposing the Pharisees’ “disease” but also offers the cure per his teaching, first to the guests (14:7–11) and then to the host (14:12–14, 16–24).

In the second scene (14:7–11), Jesus exhorts the guests to choose the lowliest seats when invited to a banquet. The saying presupposes a number of socio-cultural customs from the Greco-Roman and Jewish banquets; pedagogic conversation during meals is also a common *topos* in numerous writings of the time.⁵¹ For example, it is assumed that honor seeking and seating arrangements are closely connected. One’s status and rank were *sine qua non* of the Greco-Roman formal meals.⁵² In light of general honor-shame cultural patterns of the time, striving for the best seats is hardly surprising.⁵³ Though there are some exceptions,⁵⁴ breaking this customary social etiquette was met with

49 For numerous examples, see especially Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 30–38; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 2822–2850. E.g. Polybius, *Hist.* 13.2.2; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.9; Lucian *Gall.* 21–23. The comparison between greed and dropsy was common enough to become proverbial.

50 Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 32.

51 Ibid., 45. For broadly Jewish writings, see, for example, Prov 23:1; 25:6–7; Sir 3:17–20; 7:4; 13:8–10; 29:27; 32:1–2; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.4.9; *Let. Aris.* 263; Philo, *Conf.* 67–68; 1QS 2.11–22. For Greco-Roman authors, see for example, Plato, *Symp.* 177D–E, 212C–213B; Plutarch, *Quest. conv.* 1.2; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.6. See Denis E. Smith, “Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 619.

52 Smith, “Table Fellowship,” 617. A good example of the Jewish ranking system is the Qumran community that emphasized the communal meals, strict hierarchy, and the rankings that accorded with it (e.g. 1QS 2.11–22).

53 For the general pattern of seating, see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 366.

54 See, for example, Smith, “Table Fellowship,” 618–620.

anger and even hostility. For example, Plutarch mentioned how his brother Timon decided to break with the protocol and allowed the guests to pick their own seats. As a result, the distinguished guests who had arrived later⁵⁵ left angrily as soon as they discovered that the most honorable seats had already been occupied (*Quest. conv.* 1.2).⁵⁶ Thus, Jesus' teaching was not just intended to give prudential instructions on how to avoid public shame during a banquet. Rather, he wants to show that the cure for coveting public honor is to take the lowest seat and to live according to kingdom teaching.⁵⁷ The scene has less to do with the virtue of humility⁵⁸ than practical association with the low position and by extension those of lowly status (cf. 1:48; 52–53). Some recent scholars have highlighted how the traditional reading has clouded the meaning of ταπεινώσις (lowly status; humility) by associating its significance almost exclusively with moral humility or piety.⁵⁹ Though the traditional aspect of humility as submission to God is found in early Christian writings (e.g., 1 Pet 5:5–6; cf. Acts 20:19), in 14:11 ταπεινώ (to be brought low/humble) is linked with the lowly position in the banquet. This is then extended further in the following saying as the host⁶⁰ is summoned to invite the πτωχοί, ἀναπίροι, χωλοί, and τυφλοί (poor, crippled, lame, and blind; 14:13). To take ἔσχατον τόπον (lowest/last place) in the banquet is to receive the cure for the insatiable greed for honor. At the same time, it is an exhortation to associate with the lowly. Those who choose to follow Jesus' teaching are in a position to become ὑψωθήσεται (will be exalted; 14:11) and μακάριοι (blessed; 14:14); that is, to receive honor and recompense from God. They will also have their place in the eschatological banquet (14:15). Based on the literal and symbolic allusions mentioned above, it is not surprising that Luke calls this saying a "parable," ἔλεγεν . . . παραβολήν⁶¹

55 As an aside, it is interesting to note that in Bolivia generally the most important or honorable person comes last to official community or state celebrations.

56 Smith, "Table Fellowship," 618. Pliny stated in response to status based meal rationing that "my freedmen do not drink the sort of wine I do, but I drink theirs." (*Ep.* 2.6.4–5). He disapproved making distinctions among the dinner guests; but, of course, all the guests were of the high class or at least well off.

57 Cf. Smith, "Table Fellowship," 619.

58 Contra Smith, "Table Fellowship," 619–620; W. Grundmann, "ταπεινός κτλ," *TDNT* 8:16–17.

59 Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, 110–114; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 49–54; Carter, "Singing in the Reign," 30–35; Grundmann, *TDNT* 8:1–26.

60 Not only the host, but also the guests who are now indebted (to the host) to reciprocate the banquet invitation, are supposed to invite the poor, lame, and the blind.

61 Many scholars have wondered the use of παραβολή here since it seems like a straightforward exemplary story. Of course, the Hebrew *masal* and Greek παραβολή have wider connotations than what is usually understood by the word "parable". See e.g.,

(told . . . parable). The theme of reversal in the kingdom of God (cf. 1:51–53; 6:20–26; 18:9–14) is once more highlighted. The link to the previous scenes can also be seen clearly.

The main section (14:12–14) shifts focus from the guests to the host. As mentioned earlier, 14:12–14 is a carefully constructed unit that exhibits parallelism to the previous scene (esp. 14:7–11). The section posits a contrast between two types of guests. One is to bypass φίλοι, ἀδελφοί, συγγενεῖς, γείτονες πλουσιοί (friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors) and instead invite πτωχοί, ἀναπείροι, χωλοί, and τυφλοί (poor, crippled, lame, blind). Other passages make it clear that Luke did not mean to exclude the aforementioned groups in *toto*.⁶² It seems that the passage is connected to other meal scenes that are characterized negatively in Luke (12:19–21; 16:19) except that it gives positive instructions to a practical way of life that conforms to the kingdom. The juxtaposition of the two groups with repetitive μὴ . . . μηδὲ (not . . . or) together with the following μήποτε (so that) that introduces a negative purpose clause makes the instruction emphatic.⁶³ Jesus pronounces such a person μακάριος (blessed) and promises a return payment at the resurrection of the just.

In order to better understand the dynamics of Jesus' instructions on the meal invitation, it is important to broaden the socio-cultural picture sketched earlier—this time from the perspective of the host. It seems clear that Jesus is addressing the host who is τῶν ἀρχόντων Φαρισαίων (leading Pharisees); that is, a Pharisee in some kind of leading position (cf. Josephus *Life* 21).⁶⁴ It is difficult to know the exact status and wealth of the Pharisee but there is an air of luxury that can be detected in the scene (e.g., γείτονας πλουσίους; rich relatives in 14:12).⁶⁵ Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that the host belongs to or is near the elite circles or at least comes from the upper range of the “middling

Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Kindle edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), 8–16.

62 The clearest examples are in Luke 15 where banquets and celebrations are held with φίλους and γείτονας (15:6) and φίλας and γείτονας (15:9). Similar guest list is assumed in 15:22–25. Surprisingly even in the following parable (14:16–24) the host first invites his rich neighbors to the banquet.

63 Cf. Martin Culy, et al., *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 482.

64 Cf. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 578.

65 The host is probably to be seen in similar terms as the host of the parable in 14:16–24. See also, Tannehill, “The Lukan Discourse on Invitations,” 1603–1616; Smith, “Table Fellowship,” 613–638.

class” in regard to his wealth.⁶⁶ The nature of Jesus’ saying comes across clearly when compared to the Greco-Roman ethos of banquet invitations and the systems of reciprocity.⁶⁷

The standard custom of the Greco-Roman elite was to invite those who were of the same class and rank.⁶⁸ In public banquets, food was distributed according to status and rank, not need.⁶⁹ If a person of low rank was invited, he was often made a mockery by serving “food that left him hungry, cheap wine and the insolence of the servants.”⁷⁰ Plutarch remarks that it is unbearable to socialize with strangers during a dinner party though such is not the case during a voyage or legal endeavors (*Quest. conv.* 708D).⁷¹ When discussing the importance of retaining class and rank distinctions, Pliny stated that “nothing is more unequal than . . . equality” (*Ep.* 9.5); and he is not the only one who echoed this sentiment (Cicero *Planc.* 15).⁷² Generally, the purpose of banquets was entertainment and social interaction.⁷³ They functioned to demonstrate wealth and rank as well as solidify social bonds among family and one’s circle of “friends.”⁷⁴ The nature of “friendship” was mainly restricted

66 While the social stratification system and poverty scale is debated among the scholars of Roman history, the recent definitive work on poverty during Late Republic and Roman Empire argues that there was a notable “middling class”; that is, people who were neither destitute nor considered wealthy (Atkins and Osborne, *Poverty in Roman World*). Longenecker (*Remember the Poor*, 36–59) and Friesen (“Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 323–361) have developed a “poverty scale” to measure economic status within the Roman Empire and particularly in the early Christianity. A less accurate use of “middle class” was common in older scholarship (e.g., Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church: Aspects of a Social History of Early Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1978], Kindle loc. 331, who states that Jesus came from the middleclass of skilled artisans) but has slipped into some more recent works as well (e.g., Goulder, *Luke*, 589; also Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric* 46).

67 I assume that though Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures retained broadly their distinct customs, the Hellenistic cultural influence had penetrated deep into the Jewish mindset and even to Palestine.

68 Woolf, “Writing Poverty in Rome,” 83–85.

69 Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society*, 117.

70 MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 111. See also Lucian *Sat.* 31–32 in which Cronus relates to the rich the complaints of the poor and addresses the substandard quality of food and the rudeness of the servants. Note also that the guests are οἱ πένητες not οἱ πτωχοί (*Sat.* 31).

71 Cf. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 55–56.

72 For other similar statements, see MacMullen, *Roman Social Rhetoric*, 105–106, 192–193.

73 Smith, “Table Fellowship,” 613–638.

74 Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society*, 148–159.

to one's equals⁷⁵ and functioned as a security net or "insurance" for the fellow members of the class. For example, if a person needed a loan, representation in the law courts or lodging outside of town in a villa, one's circle of "friends" provided the necessities. It was unthinkable to offer or receive money for such services; all that was required was to reciprocate in the same measure. Thus, Cicero asks: "Whose wealth can be or ever has been of such proportions that it can stand without the services of friends?"⁷⁶

Though the urban elite generally lived in physical proximity to the non-elite, they occupied a distinct space both socially and geographically. As Rohrbaugh has indicated, the spatial organization of the ancient city distinguished between the central area for the elite and the surrounding neighborhoods for the non-elite.⁷⁷ Though the elite were physically close by the lower ranks, they were often shielded from them, especially the poor, by their numerous slaves and intermediaries.⁷⁸ Patron-client relationships did not reach to the poorest sections of the society because they had nothing to reciprocate.⁷⁹ Thus, practically speaking, the interaction was minimal, even if a poor beggar like Lazarus had been loitering outside of a rich man's gate (cf. 16:19–23). In effect, the social distance between upper and lower classes was often insurmountable. This can be seen in the spiteful treatment of the non-elite by the elite, as illustrated above.⁸⁰ Though the attitude of the elite toward the non-elite, and particularly the beggars, was generally that of contempt, there were some exceptions. For example, Lucian often characterizes the rich in negative terms and favors the poor (esp. *Sat.*, *Cat.* and *Gall.*). Cronos states that "Rich shall not send to rich man or at Cronus's festival entertain anyone of equal standing [in a feast]" (*Sat.* 15).⁸¹

75 Friendship terminology was also applied in formal patron-client relationship and in this sense "friend" could be of the lower status; that is, the client.

76 Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 32–34.

77 Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-Industrial City," 134–136; see also, MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 57–87.

78 Woolf, "Writing Poverty in Rome," 82–85, e.g., "Roman property-owning classes moved through their city as if sealed in protective bubbles" (p. 85).

79 Ibid., 84.

80 Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 62–76. See also, for example, John 7:49; Acts 4:13; 1 Cor 1:26.

81 Hock, "Lazarus and Micyllus," 447–463; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 58–61. It is possible that Lucian takes this stance because he rose from humble circumstances himself. Perhaps his Cynic sympathies are influential as well. On critique of the rich by the poor [οἱ πένητες], see also *Sat.* 31–39.

As has been illustrated, economic patterns were closely connected to social relations; that is, to family and “friends.” A person’s social “safety net” and security consisted of people of the same class and status rather than possessions or wealth per se.⁸² Social interactions that breached class distinctions were considered dishonorable and often made one impure, especially according to Jewish purity rules. Thus, breaking of social ties with family and other social circles was disastrous for one’s wellbeing.⁸³

It is difficult to know exactly to what extent Luke’s audience would have heard the nuances of the above-mentioned socio-cultural factors. Yet, some issues seem rather clear, such as reciprocity and the importance of social networks among the upper classes. Jesus’ saying in 14:12–14 assumes a balanced reciprocity model as statements like αὐτοὶ ἀντικαλέσωσίν σε καὶ γενήται ἀνταπόδομά σοι (they will invite you and you will be rewarded; 14:12) indicate.⁸⁴ Both ἀνταποδίδωμι (repay) and ἀνταπόδομα (return payment) are part and parcel of reciprocity terminology.⁸⁵ Poor, crippled, lame, and blind are specified as a group who οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνταποδοῦναι σοι (cannot repay you; 14:14). This may appear as tautology at first sight, but it emphasizes the utter inability of these groups to bring any recompense to the patron.⁸⁶ Thus, the conventional system of reciprocity is bypassed and challenged in strong terms. Yet, though the conventional reciprocity system is challenged, and the idea of recompense is retained, the reward is now attributed to God. In a sense then, the giver loses control of both the timing and the manner of the recompense. Though most scholars focus on the phrase ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν δικαίων (in the resurrection of the righteous) as pointing exclusively to the postmortem reward,⁸⁷ it is possible that μακάριος ἔσῃ (you will be blessed) also points to blessedness or reward starting from the moment that Jesus’ action is put into practice.⁸⁸

82 Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 32–34.

83 Tannehill, “The Lucan Discourse on Invitation,” 1612–1613.

84 Hands mentions that even those sections in the Greco-Roman literature that question or soften the basic “give-and-take” reciprocity actually take the principle as the starting point (*Charities and Social Aid*, 31–32).

85 Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 129.

86 Hands (*Charities and Social Aid*, 63–64, 159) notes that even the word πώχος was at times used of people who had a small plot of land or some means (Menander, *Dysk.* 284–285; Plato, *Rep.* 552). In light of these exceptions, Jesus’ emphasis is important. Of course, in Luke, the reader is quite aware the way he uses his “poverty terminology” here.

87 E.g. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1048; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 751; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 584; Green, *The Gospel Luke*, 554.

88 Similarly, only Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 595–599; see also the Bolivian ordinary readers’ commentary earlier in this chapter. Also, the nature of rewards is not spelled

That is, the eschatological reward that will be received in the future is in some sense already experienced as blessedness (cf. 6:20–23). Even if this is implied here the focus is on the future rather than the present rewards.

For the wealthy (PS3; perhaps also PS4 to some extent) members of Luke's audience, this teaching presumably would have been extremely challenging. Those who attempted to practice it probably would have faced serious consequences from "friends" and family. It is not at all impossible that they first would be dishonored but ultimately could suffer the devastating consequence of losing their place in their social network of equals. The parable that follows (14:15–24) may be seen an illustration of just such a person who went through a type of conversion from the conventional dinner invitation practice to the kind espoused by Jesus. Thus, the host of the parable should probably not be seen as representing God in the first instance.⁸⁹ After an initial invitation and rejection by conventional "friends," he musters his energies and invites the unthinkable guests following Jesus' teaching (14:12–14, 21–23). Though the parable does not explicitly illustrate the rejection of the host, the idea is implied in the larger context; that is, in the replies of the invitees (14:18–20)⁹⁰ and in the following sayings about cross-bearing (14:25–33).

Closer to the point, the challenge to invite the poor and the needy should be seen in both economic and socio-political terms. As Moxnes has demonstrated, the redefined interaction between the two socio-economically distant groups would challenge the conventional reciprocity system and turn it into one-way redistribution from the rich to the poor and needy.⁹¹ That is, "the flow of resources, food, social recognition, and friendship" is offered to the most vulnerable within the society (cf. 6:32–36).⁹² In light of the earlier discussion on the importance of social networks between family and "friends," the connection between social interaction and economics becomes all the more important. In other words, the passage is not just about giving food to a poor person or inviting a lame to a one-time dinner party. Rather, it is about extending social relations and the accompanying economic benefits to those who have absolutely nothing to offer in light of the Greco-Roman value system. Further,

out with any specificity. As discussed in 6:20–26, the exclamation *μακάριος* is rather congratulation than a specific reward.

89 E.g. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 98–128; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 554–562; for a view that sees host as representing God, see, for example, Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 337.

90 See especially Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 98–128.

91 Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 127–134; 240–268.

92 Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*, 133; Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations," 240–268.

the idea of receiving recompense exclusively from God excludes the all-too-common laudatory remarks and displays that wealthy patrons usually expect from their clients.⁹³ The recipients are not expected to even grant honor to the banquet host. Politically, the subversion of the traditional patron-client system and values were undoubtedly seen, at the least, as controversial. The idea of benefaction and network of friends reached all the way to the emperor who was seen as the great benefactor of humanity.⁹⁴ In Luke's story, however, the great benefactor is God who recompenses those who live according to kingdom rule. Those of high rank and wealth are to include poor, crippled, lame, and blind into their social network and redistribute to them without expecting anything from them except the recompense that comes from God. Luke is thus challenging the socio-cultural and economic system through this teaching. The Christian community is to adopt a praxis that challenges the social interaction patterns, status, and possessions of the wealthy; moreover, they instead are to embrace the poor and marginalized as equal members of the community without expecting the usual reciprocal returns from them. In this manner, the Christian community is to embody the kingdom values and life of God's covenant justice and faithfulness as taught by Jesus.

5.3 Toward a Critical Dialogue—Reading Luke 14:12–14 across Contexts

As was the case in the previous sections (6:20–26; 12:22–34), despite their differences, the scholarly readings and the Bolivian groups' opinions have points of contact. Bolivian readers focused on sharing as well as the rewards that God grants as a consequence. The MG emphasized the concrete and material aspects of giving. The PG also acknowledged the material dimension of giving, though often they focused on the spiritual aspects. It seems clear that focal point of Luke 14:12–14 and the surrounding context were to persuade the wealthy in the audience to share and break conventional status-based boundaries. Maria (PG) commented that had the teaching of Jesus been practiced in

93 Garnsey and Saller note that one of the important ways that a person's status was measured and advertised included the scene of *salutatio*; that is, the number of clients who came to visit the patron's house early in the morning to offer services in response to the benefaction of the patron (*The Roman Society*, 121–123). Cicero also states that “most people are generous in their gifts not so much by natural inclination but by reason of the lure for honor” (*Off.* 1, 14; see Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 49, 157).

94 Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society*, 148–150.

biblical times, it would have amounted to social revolution.⁹⁵ Her comments, however, go beyond historical explanation and hint at similar implications for the present. Of course, the MG's comments and longing for a classless society and radical sharing echo what Maria stated explicitly.

As was seen, José's (PG) hypothetical banquet that included the poor and homeless people from the street was deemed impractical and even dangerous. The only reason to hold such a party would be to advertise one's altruism. This is probably one of the reasons that led to the lengthy discussion on the motives of giving as well. When compared to the ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish honor and shame culture, this sounds surprisingly familiar; that is, giving was trumpeted loudly and was a way to bolster one's public image as a benefactor (e.g. Cicero *Off.* 1, 14; Luke 11:42; Matt 6:2). Yet, José's comments about the banquet and Maria's (PG) spontaneous exclamation not to attend also reflect the gap between the social classes in the present-day Bolivia (and undoubtedly elsewhere). It is not difficult to imagine that there could have been similar or even stronger reactions in Luke's audience to this passage. Nevertheless, though Maria stated that she would not attend José's banquet, there were no indications that José would be ostracized from the community had he followed through with the banquet. This is what I proposed might have happened in the Greco-Roman context if a wealthy person decided to practice solidarity with the beggars on a regular basis.⁹⁶

The pastor (MG) mentioned the importance of reciprocity culture in eastern Bolivia.⁹⁷ This cultural convention had had a negative impact on the MG group's dealings with more privileged individuals. The practical implication of this came across in the inability to bring sufficient presents to a wealthy

95 Kim is the only Lucan scholar to my knowledge who has used similar terminology; that is, the subversion of reciprocity culture would lead to "something akin to social revolution" (Kyoung-Jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology* (JSNT Supp. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 185–186). Other scholars undoubtedly echo similar sentiments.

96 Of course, since José never held the banquet, it is impossible to know what would have happened in the PG's church. Nevertheless, based on Maria's comments, it seems unlikely that she would stay in the church community if the kind of banquets José mentioned were held frequently. It is noteworthy that both PG and MG are rather homogeneous in socio-economic outlook. According to my observation and discussions with various people, there were a number of large Pentecostal churches (500+ attendees on Sunday mornings) that included individuals from different professions and social classes.

97 Reciprocity is also one of the important values of the Andean region and permeates the whole of life, including the cosmic dimension (Estermann, *Filosofía Andina*, 145–149, 252–275).

person. This simple yet profound example highlighted the experience of one marginalized couple (Pastor and *pastora*)⁹⁸ and their dealings with somebody “who has everything.” Though the discussion mainly reflects the experience of the group, it is also a critique of the existing socio-political and cultural arrangements within the church and society. Perhaps Luke also, by highlighting the two starkly differing groups in the text (14:12–14), stirred a discussion (in addition to hoped-for practice) in his own time about the injustices within the church and society. If my historical reading is close to the mark, in the late first century urban communities that Luke addressed, the wealthy particularly would have been challenged by the text. What the practical implications would have been is difficult to know; however, it is possible that it would have prompted a discussion similar to that of the Bolivian MG among the poor and marginalized in the community.

Reciprocity came across also as the Bolivian groups discussed the rewards for giving. God was seen as the one who rewarded the giver and thus was the patron *par excellence*. Both groups viewed the rewards as this worldly as well as postmortem. It is interesting to note that most scholars opine that Luke 14:14 only refers to postmortem rewards.⁹⁹ The MG group also highlighted the justice aspect of action-consequence theology. God reciprocates to the giver because He is just. The notion of rewards was general with the MG but took a more concrete and monetary aspect in the PG’s reading. In light of Jewish ideas of God’s this-worldly rewards (Deut 28:1–45; Prov 10:2–4, 13:18, 22:4; Philo *Praem.* 98–126, 127–151; Sir 7:31–35, 11:14–17, 12:1–7), and other passages in Luke (e.g., 18:29–30), it is probable that Luke’s audience would have heard the rewards more holistically and potentially also this-worldly, contrary to the assumptions of most current biblical scholars. Yet it is important to note that the synoptic comparison indicates that Luke downplays this-worldly aspect of rewards compared to Mark, at least in some passages (e.g., Luke 18:29–30// Mark 10:29–30; see also Matt 19:29–30).¹⁰⁰ Further, since the text in 14:12–14 is particularly addressed to the well off, the focus of the reward is in the future rather than present.

98 Other group members seemed to agree and identify with the example.

99 The exception to this is Bovon, *El evangelio según San Lucas II*, 595–599.

100 Both Luke and Matthew include more austere versions of this-worldly rewards. Matthew omits ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ altogether (Matt 19:29). Mark has the emphatic ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ and even νῦν (missing from D though). Mark also repeats the concrete form of this-worldly reward as ἐν οἰκίας καὶ ἀδελφοῦς καὶ ἀδελφῆς καὶ μητέρας καὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀγροῦς (also adds μετὰ διωγμῶν). Luke includes ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ but omits νῦν as well as the repetition of the list of rewards.

It seems that the Bolivian readers' perspectives brought little that was exceptionally new to the historical reading as such; however, they highlighted aspects that are hardly represented in the scholarly commentaries (i.e., this-worldly rewards of Luke 14:14). There were also a number of similarities and points of contact between the historical reading and the present-day readings that I found mutually illuminating. Finally, though Luke probably directed this passage mainly to those who were rather well off, the present-day MG highlighted aspects that could have found echoes in Luke's less privileged audience as well, not least the longing to see God's kingdom values practiced in their own communities.

Both the present-day readers and my historical reading agree on one significant aspect—it is difficult to cross socio-economic boundaries, which makes Jesus' teaching extremely challenging in any culture. Luke primarily addresses the "givers" but takes into consideration the position of the poor and marginalized as well. If the teaching of Jesus were ever practiced in concrete circumstances, it would present a great challenge to the wealthy to expand their social circles and engage in economic redistribution to the poor and the despised. As the subsequent parable demonstrates, after his conversion, the host had to bring (εἰσάγαγε ᾧδε) and compel to come (ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν; 14:21–23) the poor and the marginalized. That is, the poor had to be persuaded and brought in to participate in this kind of banquet and, by extension, the new community. This is hardly surprising in light of the suspicion that they had toward the elite who at the very least required reciprocation.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, if a community even partially practiced this kind of solidarity, the poorer members would benefit greatly from such contra-normal actions. Their social circle would have expanded and they would have been exposed to important socio-economic contacts. While these would not have guaranteed upward mobility per se, the contacts would have opened renewed possibilities for the potential. In addition, receiving socio-economic support would have at least lifted the beggars to a subsistence level or slightly above it. The dignity of the poorer members would have improved due to at least two things: First, they would have

101 A number of scholars have struggled with the meaning of ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν not least because of the way the passage has been used in the Christian history. Some of the scholarly interpretations regarding the passage sound rather vague or even odd. For example, Fitzmyer states that the "poor...[merely] resist in their modesty such an invitation" (*The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1057; Hultgren follows Fitzmyer [*The Parables of Jesus*, 338]). It is quite difficult to understand what this "modesty" means here. Jeremias' explains the reluctance by "oriental courtesy" (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* [2nd ed; Trans. S. Hooke; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963], 177).

a possibility to socialize with people above their own socio-economic level.¹⁰² In effect, they would have received the same benefits as family members, since they would now be part of the new fictive kinship. Second, they would not be obligated to submit to the destructive forces of reciprocity; after all, God would recompense the giver. Thus, the community would become the “insurance,” not so much to uphold the elite lifestyle and social interaction, but to be an inclusive community that practiced radical κοινωνία (sharing). Luke’s vision of God’s covenant community that is based on Jesus’ teaching is to practice radical inclusivity that breaks down the existing cultural and socio-economic boundaries. The kingdom of God is to have its concrete manifestation in the life of the community, particularly as it embraces the most vulnerable of society. God as the patron of the community rewards those who practice this radical solidarity that Jesus taught, even if His recompense comes in His own way and timing. Whether this vision ever (fully) came into concrete realization in the first century is difficult to say. It seems that Jesus did practice it in his own way,¹⁰³ and the first Christian communities made many attempts to live it out, though often less radically (Gal 2:10; 6:9–10; Rom 12:13, 16; 15:25–26; 1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 8–9; Eph 4:28; 1 Tim 5:3–16; *Did* 1:5–6; 2:5–7, et al.).¹⁰⁴ As the Bolivian groups’ readings demonstrated, there is a longing to understand and appropriate the teaching of Jesus. Both groups reflected on the text and their current practices in distinct ways and manners and based on their respective socio-economic and religious contexts. In all this, one cannot help but see a

102 This obviously presupposes the acceptance of the wealthier persons in practice not just in theory.

103 Of course, Jesus was not wealthy, so to some extent he was able to demonstrate it only partially. On Jesus’ social location, see Douglas E. Oakman, “Was Jesus a Peasant? Implications for Reading the Jesus Tradition (Luke 10:30–35),” in *The Social World of the New Testament* (eds. J. Neyrey and E. Steward; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 123–140.

104 Luke’s reports may be somewhat polished pictures of the early church, but I would not dismiss all of them as purely utopian (Acts 2:44–47; 4:32–37; 5:1–11; 6:1–6; 11:27–29). For the early community in Acts, see, for example, Aaron J. Kuecker, “The Spirit and the ‘Other,’ Satan and the ‘Self’: Economic Ethics and as a Consequence of Identity Transformation in Luke-Acts,” in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (ed. B. Longenecker and K. Liebengood; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 81–103; Stephen C. Barton, “Money Matters: Economic Relations and the Transformation of Value in Early Christianity,” in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (eds. B. Longenecker and K. Liebengood; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 76–80. On Paul’s communities and how they practiced sharing and caring for the poor, see Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 135–156, 183–316. See also, Sondra E. Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

gap between the ideal and life's practical limitations, even if both groups elicited a strong faith in God to bring about a positive change in their respective circumstances. Yet, the text did prompt reflection and perhaps even some action. Nevertheless, all this was based on the communities' understanding of faith and experience and had little or nothing to do with what (esp. Western) scholars opine about the text.

Analysis of Ordinary and Scholarly Readings of Luke 16:19–31

This chapter focuses on the analysis of Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). The format is identical with the previous chapters—the first part presents the empirical materials, the second focuses on a historical reading, and in the final section I conduct a dialogue across the contexts.

6.1 Empirical Reading of Luke 16:19–31 by the Bolivian Pentecostal Groups

6.1.1 *Socio-Economically Marginalized Group's Reading of Luke 16:19–31*

6.1.1.1 Possessions and Social Status

The socio-economically marginalized group focused on the contrast between the Rich Man and Lazarus throughout the reading. The participants found fruitful ways of comparing and contrasting their own life with both the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Daniel: What catches my attention is that every day, it says, we can only eat let's say on Sundays a festive meal. But . . . he ate every day the best and can you imagine [that] he wore extra fine clothing . . . I have had nice clothes only because I have bought used clothes, right? But it says that he had fine clothes to wear of purple and fine linen . . . something that I am never going to be able to buy.

The condition of the Rich Man is then compared to that of Lazarus.

Daniel: In turn . . . this poor person, for him it was not a life that he lived. He suffered here whereas the other person enjoyed life here and the other did not. Because this world is not ours, like this poor man, this beggar, he was conscious that it was not his world . . . the attitude of the poor, he was not worried about what to eat . . . in turn the Rich Man he worried, right? . . . And he had a banquet everyday and he was worried about having a social status which everybody else applauds.

The situation of Lazarus at the gate of the Rich Man is further described in vivid detail.

Rosa: The sores have worms . . .

Daniel: Imagine it is even worse when I scratch them . . . the pain Lazarus had . . .

Pastora: The pain and smell . . .

Daniel: And the dogs bothered him . . . and the mosquitoes bother us all the time . . . and the flies when we are eating¹ . . . but imagine the dogs that he could not chase away because [always] another one came to lick him . . . and all the pain that it caused him. He became sicker and hungrier because he did not have anything to eat.

The downward spiral of Lazarus' condition is derived from the text but the setting outside the Rich Man's mansion is further described by taking clues from the readers' own context. The dogs are described as scavengers that caused pain to Lazarus. As seen in previous readings, the text horizon and the socio-cultural context of the group merge here. Further, the group imagined the situation at the gate of the Rich Man and the nuisance Lazarus must have caused the Rich Man by his mere presence.

Daniel: Like here when the beggars come here [church's soup kitchen] all the time, oh darn, smelling, and they do not bring money and they are given food to eat, and it is a nuisance and that's the reality. Now this rich man was certainly furious, because imagine a five-star feast . . . and in comes a man with sores and he smells, is poorly clothed, and has dogs trailing behind him. Imagine what a nuisance; it is certain that he did not want him to come even close to the gate.

The Rich Man is further described as stingy, someone who did not want to help Lazarus in any way.

1 The soup kitchen of the church was actually a part of the church sanctuary. As I visited the soup kitchen on several occasions, there were often swarms of flies that were a nuisance to everybody.

Roxana: He [Rich Man] did not even give him [Lazarus] a bowl of soup but he had to share the crumbs that fell from the table with the dogs. He had to pick the crumbs from the ground.

Despite this, one person saw a more humane side in the Rich Man.

Daniel: The humanity of this Rich Man was not all bad but when he was in troubled situation of pain [in Hades] . . . and he said to him [Abraham] that he does not want his brothers to come where he was . . . imagine now what problems he might have had with his brothers, like everyone does.

It is perhaps notable that the group spent considerable time in describing the condition of Lazarus and much less of the Rich Man. Daniel described him somewhat and then referred to mainly only as a point of comparison to Lazarus. It may have been that their socio-economic condition was one of the reasons why the group focused on the fate of Lazarus more than on the Rich Man. Juana's comment reflects her social location and probably that of the majority within the group.

Many times I am happy for what I have because let's say I don't worry about the material things, because I do not have anything [laughs]. I am peaceful here because if I had a plasma TV and my thing, I would worry about it and would guard my things, right? But sometimes it makes me think that it is necessary [to have things] . . . but I am content for what God gives me.

The parable also prompted a discussion regarding people's material possessions. Some saw socio-economic status as predetermined reality, whereas others emphasized individual choice and responsibility.

Pastor: The question of predestination. Was Lazarus predestined to be poor and the rich man rich?

Me: Does it say that?

Daniel: I think that He [God] allowed these things to happen in order to show us as an example to imitate.

Pastora: I think that it was already predestined by God in the same way as we, as the word of the Lord says, that already before He formed him He already knew; we were chosen, that's how I believe.

Juana: I also agree with that.

Pastor: I believe in the sovereignty of God... He has the authority to make one rich and another poor but the decision rests on oneself... if the Rich Man put into practice, practiced all of the biblical principles, I believe that Lazarus' life would change. Had he been for example kind, had he been, he would have made him sit at his table [Juana: the rich man], the rich man, right? ... Lazarus' life would have changed from the beginning... but the [rich] man was hard.

As can be seen from the above comments, there were a variety of views regarding the prescribed lot of the poor and rich. Comments on the Rich Man and Lazarus also led to reflection on the present-day reality. Opinions ranged from a simple predetermination of the lot of the rich and poor to an emphasis on personal responsibility and choice. The sovereignty of God was affirmed by both main opinions, but for one (*pastora*) it seemed to overrule human choice, whereas for the other (pastor) it complemented it.

Despite the appearance, I do not think this was a simple discussion of theodicy. Rather, it was something that emerged out of the group's precarious socio-economic situation. In the discussion, it is not only possible to hear longings for a better life and upward social mobility but also a sense of resignation (e.g., *pastora*, Juana). The pastor, on the other hand, had a strong faith that one's situation could change if one (especially the rich) practiced sharing and lived a life that honored God. For him, the parable was a critique of the rich and elicits a hope for transformation. It is noteworthy that both the pastor and *pastora* alluded to biblical passages as they justified their views. Pastor appealed to the parable (16:19–31) and *pastora's* words echoed Eph 1:4–5 (and possibly Ps 139:13–14, RV).²

6.1.1.2 Salvation and Benefit

Regarding salvation, the group was impressed by the way the parable presented God's privileged treatment of the poor.

Juana: What I notice is that how God fixed His attention on Lazarus to take him into His presence together with Abraham and the other who had everything He put him in the other place.

2 *Pastora's* original comment was: "Yo pienso que si ya estaba predestinado por Dios, igual nosotros mismo o sea dice la Palabra del Señor que El desde antes que lo formase ya sabía, estábamos escogidos yo pienso que sí."

Daniel: God is sovereign to decide . . . it does not say that Lazarus read the Bible or of the results that he believed in God. The Bible simply says that he was poor and beggar, right? . . . He just worried about life and how to feed himself.

In addition, the group spent considerable time discussing the reason why the Rich Man went to torment and Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham. The Rich Man was depicted as not only enjoying good things in life but also as a church-going Christian who knew the Bible.

Daniel: This Rich Man knew God and the Bible, because it says that when he was in hell he says, “Father Abraham” . . . he knew the way one can give one’s life to Christ.

The group also pointed out the reversal of fortunes as an important part of the parable

Daniel: These two attitudes here that one enjoyed life, to put it this way, the Rich Man enjoyed all the days here on earth . . . for the poor it was not life . . . but when . . . positions change . . . one goes to Hades and the other to the bosom of Abraham. One who enjoys life here, one who did not enjoy life here and the other is now suffering, darn, right?

In addition to the above, the group pointed out many, sometimes contradictory, reasons for the fate of both Lazarus and the Rich Man.

Juana: Because the Rich Man did not practice or did not share with the poor, because the Bible states that one has to share everything, be it a lot or a little. He was eating and the other was picking up [crumbs].

Pastora: Because . . . God had already made a decision that it would be this way.

Pastor: It is not like that . . . Lazarus made a decision and the Rich Man made a decision . . . it did not depend on God . . . had the Rich Man done good works he would possibly not have been there.

Daniel: Since God is sovereign to decide . . . it does not say that Lazarus read the Bible or that he believed in God. The Bible simply says that he was poor and beggar, right? Now the other thing is that we are not saved

by works, right? So this Rich Man also . . . he could not give anything, even if he helped the beggars, right? Now . . . he [Rich Man] had but did not give . . . the Rich Man knew the word of God but Lazarus, I do not know if he knew it or not. God makes a decision not for what man does . . . but He looks at one's heart . . . the god of the Rich Man was money . . . and the poor man just worried about life and feeding himself.

The multiple perspectives reflect the earlier discussion regarding the predetermined position of the rich and the poor respectively. Yet, Juana's comments are quite concrete as she urged radical sharing.³ Daniel's position holds God's sovereignty and inner motives in tension. Pastor and *pastora* held opposing poles in terms of human decision and predestination by God. It is quite surprising how such a variety of views were represented in such a small group.

Finally, and perhaps surprisingly, many commented on the phrase "send Lazarus" that the Rich Man utters to Abraham in Hades. Perhaps, one of the obvious reasons for this request was the Rich Man's desire to warn his brothers. The group pointed out other aspects, however, that perhaps were a bit more surprising.

Pastora: Because Lazarus knew the whole family [of the Rich Man], because he stayed outside his mansion, that's why he said, "Send Lazarus." These people already knew that Lazarus had died . . . "Send Lazarus" . . . I think there were lots of people in the bosom of Abraham but the Rich Man only knew Lazarus.

Pastora's comment is interesting since she seems to think that Lazarus was the only person whom the Rich Man recognized in Abraham's bosom.⁴ Rosa's comment pushed the limits of imagination, in my opinion.

Rosa: Maybe he [Lazarus] had been [a] rich man earlier and had sold all of his possessions . . . maybe he had seen the joy that people had who had given their last resources . . . that's why I think that the Rich Man says to him, "Send Lazarus."

³ Juana echoes here other Lucan texts that we had already read (cf. 12:22–43; 6:20–26).

⁴ This makes one wonder whether *pastora's* comment implied that the Rich Man's deceased relatives and friends were also in torment. After all, the only person who he recognized was Lazarus.

It is somewhat difficult to understand Rosa's comments here. Perhaps she wanted to highlight the joy of giving that Lazarus had experienced before becoming a beggar, and how the Rich Man missed the opportunity even if he realized the joy it had brought to people. As a result, the Rich Man now regretted it and wanted to send Lazarus to his people. Alternatively, it is possible that Rosa took a clue from the earlier session when the passage about giving up possessions was read (12:32–33).

6.1.1.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As in the earlier readings, the interpretative horizons were fused without any concern for possible difference between historical context and readers' present-day contexts. In fact, some group members specifically mentioned how similar the biblical story was to their own situation.

Pastor: There is no difference [between then and now] or it remains the same . . . there are the rich and the poor and the same scenario continues because there are people who are hard and people who are gentle or it has not changed.

Overall, imagination played an important part in deciphering the meaning of the text and was one of the main explanation strategies of the group. In addition, it seemed that on several occasions the parable was taken like a literal story that had happened, and it in a sense was not considered a parable. The group felt quite free, however, to expand aspects in the storyline with creative imagination, as was the case with Rosa who opined that Lazarus might have been rich earlier.

The participants entered freely into the story-world of the parable and read their own socio-economic and religio-cultural experiences into and out of it in a way that expanded it and made it come alive. Probably since the characters in the parable were of the extreme sort socio-economically, nobody directly identified with either Lazarus or the Rich Man. At the same time, some group members distinguished themselves from certain people who came to the soup kitchen to eat (e.g., Daniel). The lot of these people were identified more closely with Lazarus. Also, the nuisance they caused in the church's soup kitchen (smell, no money) was likened to the nuisance that Lazarus caused to the Rich Man at his gate. In a sense, they echoed the Rich Man to some degree. The parable did become partially "their story," however, in that the harsh conditions of Lazarus were imagined in vivid detail along with the nuisance his presence must have caused to the Rich Man's five-star banquet. Juana also explicitly

recognized her own precarious socio-economic situation and emphasized the importance of sharing. The group's social location possibly played a role in the emphasis on these aspects.

Theological convictions were brought forward explicitly as the group attempted to make sense of two particular topics. The first was the question of predetermined fate of the poor and the rich and the second was the reason for the postmortem fate of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Regarding the predetermined lot of the poor and rich, opinions differed. Nevertheless, both the pastor and *pastora* used a mixture of doctrinal keys⁵ along with references to biblical texts to justify their positions. The main theological convictions that were highlighted were God's sovereignty, grace, and predestination (held with differing emphases by Daniel, *pastora*, and Juana) and individual responsibility (esp. pastor). As mentioned earlier, it was not just an abstract discussion on theodicy but probably reflected the difficult life-situation of the community. As will be seen, no such discussion emerged in the affluent group. Similarly, the reasons for the postmortem fate of the Rich Man and Lazarus combined doctrinal keys and simple echoes of biblical texts as an explanation strategy.

Regarding praxeological effects, the group mentioned how reading this parable encouraged them to continue practicing material and spiritual help and to change their community.

Pastor: I believe that to change situations we need to do what the word of God says, what the Lord says, that is, there is a change around us.

Daniel: Then, continue fulfilling, I believe, as the church . . . this message in our community to provide food for the poor . . . and the other is the urgency to preach the word of God.

Some also mentioned the importance of using the parable as an example of not falling into the same trap as the Rich Man.

Juana: He wants to give us this message because He places both the poor and the rich as an example so that we would not fall like the rich.

5 The main theological convictions pointed to God's sovereignty, grace, and predestination (Daniel, *pastora*, and Juana with varying degrees and emphases) and individual responsibility (esp. pastor).

Action-consequence theology was mentioned only once during the reading of the parable, within which the pastor wanted to remind the group of the consequences of one's actions. Nevertheless, the consequences seemed to point this time more to the postmortem fate rather than earthly realities.

He wanted to teach that there is law of sowing and reaping and even if it appeared that we are not going to reap, we are going to reap either for eternal life or destruction.

Daniel, on the other hand, brought up again the idea of prosperity theology as something to be critiqued.

In this world . . . time to make use of, time to acknowledge what I focus on, what is my god that I cling to, because it says: "Blessed are the poor" or happy are the poor; that God applauds if sometimes you feel or are poor, right? . . . Today there are doctrinal currents that if you have a car or a mansion it is synonymous with God's blessing but if you do not have it you are in sin . . . then make use of what God wants to teach us through these parables, right?

Finally, the group wanted to encourage one another to practice spiritual disciplines of prayer, evangelism, and Bible reading as well as taking care of their families.

6.1.2 *Privileged Group's Reading of Luke 16:19–31*

6.1.2.1 Possessions and Social Status

The privileged group paid a lot of attention to the inner attitudes of people and tended to downplay the material wealth and poverty of the Rich Man and Lazarus respectively.

Pastor: The only thing that I do not like about this here is that it is misinterpreted a lot in regards to riches . . . the devil uses this to say that riches are not from God that the rich are not.

Ruben: The rich are self-sufficient . . . it shows the insensitivity of the Rich Man.

Carina: He [Rich Man] did not worry; he was sitting at the gate of his house and did not even see him [Lazarus].

Juana: The poor could have been a poor person who is cursing the rich but it does not say so . . . one trusted in his money and the other that his needs would be truly satisfied.

Pastor: In reality this [passage] has nothing to do with riches or poverty . . . the message is not about it; many people confuse it. Rather, it is the attitude; one can be rich and give.

The insensitive attitude of the Rich Man comes also across clearly in Hades as he gives orders to Lazarus.

Ruben: After that he said that please send Lazarus. He still asked that Lazarus, he still asked that Lazarus would serve him . . . he continued in his attitude . . . as he was rich, he continued to command Abraham that he would send Lazarus so that he would preach to his brothers; he still had that attitude.

In other sections, a bit more attention was paid to the material aspects of the parable even if often the pastor or somebody else quickly countered the idea with a more spiritualizing interpretation.

Pastora: He had his evil things in his life and the other his good things in his life but what happens is that people need like Jesus said earlier . . . blessed are the poor.

Pastor: Yes but it does not talk about the poor in money but in spirit . . . the rich have a lot of needs. I have seen . . . they have more needs than the poor.

Carina: The rich, he lived eating festively with good clothes. He was ambitious, coveting, and insensitive. The poor longed to satisfy himself, was sick, endured humiliation, hunger . . . pain.

Overall, it is difficult to say exactly what positions each group member took, although a spiritualizing tendency was evident.⁶ The pastor was an example of the spiritualizing emphasis, paying the least attention to the socio-economic

6 The above comment by Carina is a direct response to what group members think the Rich Man and Lazarus are like. There was little explanation or comments in addition to the comment.

aspects of the parable, and at times stated that it had nothing to do with money. He stated that wealth was to be considered God's blessing rather than from the devil. The meaning of the parable for him focused on the attitude of the heart above all and as such had little to do with social status or how much or little one owned. In a sense, the pastor also wanted to problematize the simple dichotomy between the Rich Man and poor Lazarus in the parable by showing how sometimes the rich are humble and the poor arrogant. After a short discussion on the fact that most evangelical Christians in Bolivia are seen as belonging to either the working class or the poor, the pastor stated:

I have known rich people who are humble, ten times richer with thousands and millions of dollars and humble . . . it is possible to be millionaire but poor in spirit, that's what I think.

On the other hand, some group members encouraged social mobility and discouraged stagnation to one's socio-economic position.

Pastor: One needs to be careful because when one says this [that poor have good attitude when they do not curse the rich], they are going to say: Ah, God will give you crumbs and keeps you a beggar . . . there needs to be a balance.

Juanita: It is important that the one, the one who lives in poverty is careful, because in reality it is possible to not have an attitude that overcomes . . . if one is sick . . . one conforms to the sores.

Thus, though the material conditions of the Rich Man and Lazarus were reflected on occasionally, the main focus was on the inner disposition of both characters and by implication of the present-day readers.

6.1.2.2 Salvation and Benefit

Carina, who had criticized earlier⁷ her former Catholic understanding of the preferential position of the materially poor, entertained the idea once again. This time her stance was more positive in regards to her former interpretation.

Carina: Well, this is what catches my attention. I understand that the word is not only *logos*, right? But if one reads, and understanding what

⁷ See her comments on Luke 6:20 (p. 128).

it says here . . . the rich goes to Hades because he is a tyrant but the poor goes to heaven for being poor.

Her comments initiated an intense discussion on the reasons why the Rich Man ended in torment and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom.

Pastora: [everybody is discussing intensely] . . . because like in the earlier parable, right? Blessed are the poor in spirit because they have a need of the kingdom.

Pastor: Of spirit . . .

Pastora: What happens with the rich is that they are self-sufficient.

Ruben: They do not worry about God . . . they think they can live with the material they have.

Carina: I understand that, but it is here, it says clearly, but there was a beggar whose name was Lazarus who had been thrown to the gate and was full of sores and longed to satisfy himself with the crumbs that that fell. Or, how he had suffered a lot here and now has gained heaven.

Pastora: It would seem to say that, but it is not so.

Ruben: Yes, what happens is that it demonstrates the insensitivity of the Rich Man.

This discussion demonstrates the emphasis of the group on the importance of the attitude of the Rich Man in determining his postmortem fate. Apart from Carina's comments, Lazarus was discussed less. If Carina read the text more literally, others seemed to refer to spiritual poverty and wanted to draw a spiritual lesson from the concept more directly.

Even though Carina insisted here that Lazarus was saved just for being poor and suffering, she nevertheless seemed to change her mind to reflect the consensus of the group later on.

Carina: Maybe for this poor person [Lazarus], poverty made him seek God more . . . for his spiritual position on earth, for his spiritual position on earth he enters Hades or Abraham's bosom; it depends on this.

Rather unanimously, the reason for the lot of the Rich Man was his attitudes; the idea came forth several times.

Ruben: For his insensitivity and lack of love he [Rich Man] was in this condition [in Hades]...the Rich Man continued commanding Abraham...he still had that attitude.

Juana: He [Rich Man] asked for Abraham and didn't call to God. He calls out to Abraham, was it because he was his equal? Abraham was his equal so let's see how we can negotiate this thing, right?

Juana's comment is interesting as she saw the Rich Man's plea as a sort of attempt to negotiate a deal with him rather than appeal directly to God. The reasons for Lazarus' fate were discussed much less, though most saw that he trusted in God. *Pastora* further conceptualized the attitudes of the Rich Man and Lazarus and compared them to the thief on the cross.

Like the thief who was next to Jesus [on the cross]; to recognize that I am here because I deserve it...in this parable we can see the two sides of humanity.

Thus, the importance of repentance was also brought forth along with the urgency of repenting while there is still time.

Ruben: Repentance is the first principle of salvation.

Pastora: People do not convert through a miracle⁸...but through the Word.

Pastor: Due to conviction of the Spirit.

Finally, perhaps *pastora*'s comment was illustrative of the groups' general stance on salvation.

Materially rich, materially poor; one does not have Jesus, one does not have anything.

8 *Pastora* had earlier told about marvelous miracle of somebody who had been raised from the dead.

6.1.2.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As with the MG, the privileged group fused the text horizon and their current experience without further consideration of the historical gap. Carina appealed to the *logos-rhema* dichotomy though she did not elaborate further: "I understand that the word is not only *logos*."

To a large extent, the group's primary goal was to draw spiritual lessons from the parable, which was done by using the Rich Man as a negative character type. The moral corruption of the Rich Man was mainly his callous inner disposition, and this was the simple lesson that the group members drew from the parable.

Pastor: We have to guard our hearts . . . we have to be more sensitive.

Pastora: Not to put our confidence in the material.

Rosita: Humility and obedience . . .

The group as a whole seemed to practice a sort of collective discernment, as was the case when Carina tried to revert back to her former Catholic interpretation.

The insistence of the Rich Man to send Lazarus to give evidence of the terrible postmortem fate prompted a discussion on the ineffectiveness of miracles to convert people to faith.

Pastora: People do not convert for seeing a miracle. Many people can see the supernatural; can even see miracles but one does not convert for this reason. They convert due to the conviction of the word . . . because it says here even if a dead person will rise from the dead; they are not going to convert. But they have the prophets and Moses, let them hear them.

Here belief in miracles and God's intervention in the world are taken for granted but at the same time are seen as ineffective to convert people to faith. Hermeneutically, this was an important bridge to the parable as the present-day experience and the Rich Man's comment in *hades* were juxtaposed.⁹ As such, *pastora's* commentary also showed clearly how the biblical text and the present-day experience merged together to the extent that it was difficult to

9 *Pastora's* commentary shows clearly how the biblical text and the present-day experience merge together to the extent that it is difficult to see the line between the present-day and textual horizons.

see the line between the present-day horizon and textual horizon. Finally, the importance of “pneumatic” hermeneutics and the Pentecostal worldview came across in the pastor’s comments. According to him, the devil is able to utilize passages of scripture to his own advantage, particularly to mislead people into thinking that the parable focuses on material possessions. Spiritual forces and realities play a role in the way the Bible is interpreted and used. Thus, it is easy to see why Pentecostal interpretation is not satisfied with a hermeneutic that focuses exclusively on the rational and empirical, or even on the grammatical interpretation of the text.

The praxeological effects for the groups focused mostly on the change of individual attitudes. Undesirable inner attitudes were challenged in the group.

Rosita: What the Spirit of God wants to say to us . . . it is something spiritual, not so much about money or material poverty but spiritual poverty [Pastor: The attitude] . . . pride, haughtiness [Ruben: Exactly] . . . this is what the Lord wants us to change.

Pastora: Because sometimes we are merciful to the poor who are in jail but we are not merciful to the rich.

In addition to the inner disposition, the group also considered evangelism important.

Carina: Sometimes we are not merciful; we are insensitive to the eternity of the souls.

Juanita: We are going to talk about the false doctrines and beliefs that people have that can close the gate to salvation.

Finally, despite Rosita’s comment above, some group members also mentioned the importance of concrete giving.

Pastor: To the extent that we are blessed, we must give.

Rosita: Especially to the family of God . . . to the church or to the temple.

Pastora: Like Jesus said when you make a banquet do not invite your friends and those who can give you back but invite those who do not have, the poor, disabled, lame . . . then when we make [a banquet]

not because somebody [says] yes, this person can give me this, or that one that.

Ruben: To be more sensitive to those who are needy.

Here the more concrete forms of giving are directed to the church as well as to the poor and needy, as *pastora* loosely cited Luke 14:12–14, a passage that had been read and discussed a few weeks earlier. The praxeological effect of giving to the church is not new but reiterates the common values of the community.¹⁰ The concern for the needy and the poor might have been prompted by the earlier reading of Luke 14:12–14 and seem to be a new development. In any case, as mentioned earlier, praxeological effects are difficult to verify without longitudinal studies. Here, as in the earlier studies, the group entertained no specifically new practices on a more concrete level.

6.1.3 *Comparison of Marginalized and Privileged Reading of Luke 16:19–31*

At least partially, the readings of both groups again seemed to reflect their socio-economic status. Regarding possessions and material wealth, the PG emphasized the spiritual nature of the parable. Concrete socio-economic realities played a minor part in their reading.¹¹ One might wonder if they had been reflected on at all, had they not been specifically brought up. Pastor and Rosita explicitly stated that the importance of the passage was not wealth or poverty but rather one's inner disposition.

On the other hand, the MG focused on the concrete socio-economic aspects rather closely. Lazarus' miserable condition was described in vivid details and compared to the Rich Man's extravagant feasting. Some of the MG members saw themselves explicitly as poor (e.g., Juana). Despite this, no one in the group wanted to identify with Lazarus' condition but rather connected the people who came to the soup kitchen with Lazarus.¹² The parable also prompted a discussion on the predetermined fate of the rich and poor and the possibilities

10 The importance of tithing ten percent of one's income in Latin American Pentecostalism cannot be underestimated. Generally, the tithe is mandatory and is to be brought to the "temple" or the church. Though practices vary somewhat, the tithe mainly is used to compensate the lead pastor, staff, and for the upkeep of church properties.

11 It is important to notice that José was absent during the reading of this parable. His presence might have influenced the reading of the whole group if his focus on socio-economic realities during the readings of earlier passages had been taken as an indicator.

12 An interesting connection may be found in the pastor's earlier comments (see p. 121). He stated that he identifies himself as a poor person; however, he still compared his current condition with his pre-conversion situation as he lived in the streets and gutters of Santa

of changing one's lot. Though there was no unanimity in the MG regarding the issue, they pondered the question from the perspective of Lazarus rather than the Rich Man. This discussion on "theodicy" functioned at least partially as a critique of the rich; it also prompted hope and encouraged other MG members to work toward transformation. Such discussion was absent in the PG.

The differences in both groups' readings were also reflected in the way each perceived salvation or the benefit of God. Apart from Carina's initial comments, the PG focused on the reasons for the Rich Man's postmortem fate and paid little attention to why Lazarus was enjoying himself in Abraham's bosom. The Rich Man's fate clearly depended on his attitude but its concrete material manifestation in the parable was not discussed much. He was "proud, haughty, and insensitive," but riches per se were not considered to play a pivotal role in the salvation or in the parable by the PG. Finally, *pastora* (PG) compared the parable to the thief on the cross and thus made it into an archetype of the "two sides of humanity."

On the other hand, the MG paid close attention to the extravagant lifestyle of the Rich Man and the wretched condition of Lazarus. One of the reasons why the Rich Man was in Hades was because he did not share [all of] his possessions (e.g., Juana). The pastor also mentioned that had he done good works and shared, he might have avoided the torment. Other MG members discussed grace, God's sovereignty, and heart attitude. The Rich Man was explicitly identified as a churchgoing Christian but some MG members remained agnostic as to whether Lazarus had any faith at all since he mainly had to focus on survival (e.g., Daniel). The group was also impressed by the way God welcomed Lazarus and rejected the Rich Man.

Hermeneutically, both groups shared a Pentecostal worldview with a belief in God's intervention in the world including the miraculous. This belief did not seem to bring out new dimensions of the text; however, a worldview that emphasizes the miraculous undoubtedly does not view the gap between the present-day context and the context of biblical stories as great as those educated in Western intellectual tradition.¹³ The PG tended to spiritualize poverty in the parable and drew spiritual lessons that primarily encouraged attitudinal change. This often overshadowed any comments on the concrete material aspects of the parable. The miraculous dimension was also brought to the discussion. A present-day miracle story was juxtaposed with the parable and illumined the text by analogy. Further, the devil was seen as capable of

Cruz as a beggar. Thus, it is easy to see the two differing degrees of poverty. Similar distinction is probably assumed here.

13 Cf. Village, *The Bible and Lay People*.

deceiving people in their interpretative processes, and the pastor used this as a way to justify his spiritualizing interpretation of the parable. Overall, the praxeological effects remained on a general plane and mainly encouraged attitudinal change.

The MG's hermeneutical stance relied more on imagination and story telling. The group explored the story by consciously reading some of their own experiences into the parable (e.g., flies bothering Lazarus // flies in the church's soup kitchen). The material aspects of the parable were fore-grounded, both in the reading of the story as well as in the potential praxeological effects. There also seemed to be a more collective approach in the way the praxeological components were considered. Communal sharing of food and spiritual nourishment were seen as important realities for MG participants.

As noted above, both groups emphasized different aspects of the parable though there were overlapping themes as well. The social location of each community seemed to contribute to their differing understandings and appropriations of the parable. This became apparent in the way that each group focused on the concrete-material and spiritual-attitudinal aspects, respectively. The MG emphasized the inhumane lot of Lazarus (his was "not life") in comparison to the extravagance of the Rich Man. Other focal points were sharing of possessions and the responsibility of the rich to bring about changes. The PG largely ignored the concrete economic aspects of the parable and focused on the importance of inner disposition. Reasons for salvation and benefit of God and praxeological effects also seemed to indicate a socio-economic influence. The MG also more readily entered into the story-world and imagined the situation of Lazarus, perhaps partially due to the proximity of their socio-economic situation to the parable.

Before exploring these ideas further, I conducted an historical reading of the same text (Luke 16:19–31) and then explored the relationship between the Bolivian ordinary readers' interpretation and my own historical reading of the passage. The format follows the pattern used in earlier chapters.

6.2 Historical Readings of Luke 16:19–31

The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man was read above by two groups that represented opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum in Bolivia. Though the contrast between the groups was certainly not as stark as in the parable, it did become apparent that the social location of each had an influence on their understanding of the story. It is also interesting to note that people in Luke's audience probably would have heard the parable in more than one way.

One of the most important hermeneutical keys to understanding the parable among modern biblical scholars has been the introduction of extra-biblical parallels in the ancient literature. The most influential of these is Hugo Gressmann, who posited that Jesus used a version of the well-known Egyptian folk-tale about Setne and Si-Osire as a backdrop to the parable.¹⁴ Though Rudolf Bultmann had already criticized this view,¹⁵ it had an enormous influence on the scholarly interpretation of the parable. For example, the parable had been commonly divided into two sections (vv. 19–26, 27–31), of which the first supposedly was connected, albeit loosely, to the story of Setne and Si-Osiris or its Jewish derivatives.¹⁶ Nevertheless, even though some scholars still retain the possibility of the Egyptian background,¹⁷ the idea has been rejected by the more recent scholars, and with good reasons.¹⁸

As a partial response to the rejection of Egyptian folk-tale, other Jewish and Greco-Roman literary parallels have been sought to illuminate the parable.¹⁹

- 14 Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup 123. Leiden: Brill, 2007) 11–18, 29–38; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 182–184; see also Richard Bauckham, “The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 225–246; Hock, “Lazarus and Micylus,” 447–463.
- 15 Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition*, 196–197, 203–205.
- 16 Hock, “Lazarus and Micylus,” 449–462.
- 17 E.g. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, 826–827; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 633–634; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 183; more cautiously Bernard B. Scott, *Hear then the Parable* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 155–159.
- 18 E.g. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 427–428; Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery*, 29–38; Bauckham, “The Rich Man and Lazarus,” 225–246; Hock, “Lazarus and Micylus,” 447–463.
- 19 Hock has suggested that the parable is best read in light of Lucian's *Gallus* and *Cataplus*. These, in his view, help answer the questions of the parable's unity and ambiguity regarding reversal. While the reversal theme is similar, the rich man is explicitly depicted as immoral and hedonist, unlike in the Lucan parable. Bauckham states that “Lucian's use of the motif of reversal seems closer to Jesus' parable than . . . the Egyptian story . . . [i]n his own way, Lucian moralizes as much as the Egyptian story” (Bauckham, “The Rich Man and Lazarus,” 235). Hock also fails to provide a rationale for the unity of the parable based on his chosen parallels (so Bauckham, “Lazrus and the Rich Man,” 225–246). Other important parallels that have been suggested include 1 Enoch 22, 92–105; the story of Jannes and Jambres; and the rabbinic legend of a rich and godless couple in y. *Sanh.* 23c; y. *Hag* 77d (see S. Aalen, “St. Luke's Gospel and 1 Enoch.” *NTS* 13 [1967]: 1–13; George W. Nickelsburg, “Riches, the Rich, and God's Judgment in 1 Enoch 92–105 and the Gospel according to Luke,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 324–344; Bultmann, *History of Synoptic Tradition*, 197; Bauckham, “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” 226–231; Goulder, *Luke*, 634–635; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 419–423; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, 822–831). In addition, Gilmour suggests that one can detect “hints of Homeric verse” in Luke's parable even if no direct influence may or should be sought. Overall, Gilmour's purpose seems to be similar to Hock's.

Each of these has some similarities and differences with the parable but the parable is not dependent on any of them. Furthermore, recent studies in orality and inter-textuality have indicated that one should not be looking for direct parallels or background but rather inter-textual relations and common motifs in a given socio-cultural milieu.²⁰ Thus, what these “parallels” or similarities do demonstrate is that common motifs, such as reversal of fortunes and messages from the world of the dead, were common stock of the Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Early Christian worldview and thinking, even if the details vary.

As mentioned above, the scholarly tradition of using the Egyptian folk-tale as a parallel to the parable led many to divide it into two separate parts. The first part, according to this view, dealt with the reversal theme (16:19–26) while the second part (16:27–31) was a later addition. According to this view, by adding the latter, Luke changed the focus of the parable from reversal of fortunes to the conversion of the rich.²¹ Some scholars also state that these two parts are wholly independent²² or even contradictory²³ in nature. Nevertheless, recent literary and semiotic analyses of the parable argue for its unity.²⁴ Instead of dividing the parable into two sections, it is best seen in three parts; that is, the description of the earthly life (19–21), a dialogue (22–23), and the after-life (24–31).²⁵ Further, it is not necessary to see the two themes of reversal and conversion as mutually exclusive. Rather, the first part of the parable depicts postmortem reversal and the second instructs how to avoid judgment.²⁶

That is, to expand the search for influence on Luke's writing to Greek world in addition to Jewish. See Michael J. Gilmour, “Hints of Homer in Luke 16:19–31,” *Διδασκαλία* Spring, (1999): 23–33.

- 20 Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 45–54; see also L. T. Donaldson, “Parallels: Use, Misuse, and Limitations,” *EvQ* 55 (1983): 193–210; Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1961): 1–13. Rindge (*Jesus' Parable*) and Lehtipuu (*Afterlife Imagery*) are exemplary studies that situate Luke's parables (12:13–34; 16:19–31) among the ancient conversations on possessions, death, and after-life rather than trying to find direct parallels or supposed background.
- 21 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 25–26.
- 22 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 25–26. Schottroff has changed her mind and sees the parable as a unity (Luis Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* [trans. L. Maloney; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006], 168).
- 23 Bultmann, *History of Synoptic Tradition*, 178.
- 24 Walter Vogels, “Having or Longing: A Semiotic Analysis of Luke,” *Eglise et teologie* 20 (1989); Talbert, *Reading Luke*, Kindle loc. 3068–3127.
- 25 Volgels, “Having and Longing,” 27–46.
- 26 Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 19–21.

It is more difficult to evaluate the authenticity of the parable. It is certainly part of the Lucan special material (L) but beyond this scholars are divided.²⁷ Generally, those who divide the parable into two parts agree that the first part is authentic while the second part reflects Luke's creative hand.²⁸ Scholars who see it as a unity disagree whether Luke created the parable from pieces of traditional materials or merely shaped a story that went back to historical Jesus.²⁹

The lack of synoptic parallels makes it difficult to evaluate this in detail. The resurrection vocabulary³⁰ and connection of Moses and the prophets between the second part of the parable (16:29–31) and Luke 24:26–27, 44–46 seems to point to Luke's hand in the creation of the parable, or at least its latter part.³¹ Nevertheless, there are noteworthy differences between these two accounts and the connection is not obvious.³² Though the parable includes characteristically Lucan vocabulary and terminology throughout,³³ as mentioned earlier, this does not by itself resolve the matter. Rather, it shows that Luke reworked the materials that he received, whether by paraphrase, expansion, or other creative means. Also, the fact that the parable includes the theme of reversal does not point to its inauthenticity. It is clear that at least some of the Lucan passages that contain the idea of reversal go back to historical Jesus

27 Goulder holds a unique view that Luke created the parable. He states that "Dives and Lazarus can be seen emerging in Luke's imagination" based on Matt 5–6; 15:27; 18; and Isa 61 (*Luke*, 634–637).

28 E.g. John D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 66–67; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 141–159; Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 25–26.

29 Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 113–114; Bauckham, "Lazarus and the Rich Man," 225–246; William R. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1994), 114–130; Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 21–29.

30 ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι.

31 Crossan, *In Parables*, 66–67. He sees four links between the parable and Luke 24. They are disbelief, mention of Moses and the prophets, resurrection (16:31; 24:46), and the idea of repentance in Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20.

32 For example, the disbelief in Luke 24 is that of the disciples, not that of a wealthy man or Pharisees (cf. 16:15). The references to Moses and the prophets are in different contexts in Luke 24 (vv. 27, 44) though both presume the sufficiency of HB and speak of resurrection (Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 427–428). In addition, perhaps too obviously, the parable is not about the resurrection of Jesus and does not portray the resurrected Jesus as expounding Moses and the prophets like in Luke 24 (cf. Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 166).

33 Goulder states that thirty-one percent of the vocabulary is characteristically Lucan (*Luke*, 636–639).

(e.g., Luke 6:20–26).³⁴ Similarly, the motif of the dead appearing to the living fits the genre that depicts travels back and forth to the realm of death and as such does not give indications of the parable's authenticity.³⁵ Finally, as discussed above, the reversal theme is also a common motif in the Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.³⁶ While it is evident that Luke shaped the final form of the parable, it seems that at least a core goes back to the historical Jesus. In addition to the aforementioned arguments, the peculiar imagery and shape of the afterlife seems uncharacteristically Lucan to attribute the parable solely as his creation.³⁷ For the purpose of this study, the extent to which Luke shaped the parable is not important.

The socio-economic status of the main characters plays a significant part in the parable, and it is clear that the Rich Man and Lazarus represent two opposite extremes. The Rich Man is not only characterized as ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος (rich man) but his clothing and daily feasting betray an air of luxury. He is dressed in purple (πορφύραν) and fine linen (βύσσον). Many scholars have pointed out that the Rich Man's clothes are no ordinary garments even among the wealthy. Rather, they resemble that of a royalty (Judg 8:26; Prov 31:22; 1 Macc 8:14; *Let. Aris.* 320; 1 En. 98:2; Rev 18:20 cf. Luke 7:25; 20:46). Fitzmyer pointed out that he wore fine wool that was dyed with Phoenician purple (πορφύραν) as well as luxury undergarments.³⁸ A white garment underneath a purple robe was the sign of highest opulence.³⁹ In addition, he holds a banquet-like feast daily,⁴⁰ which

34 See e.g. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 270–274; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 524–526; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, 336–351.

35 Cf. Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 186–196; see also, Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 428.

36 Similarly, repentance is a characteristically Lucan theme but is considered to be part and parcel of Jesus' teaching by some scholars as well. See especially the important discussion on repentance and faith in Josephus, *Life*, 110; 17; 262 [22; 4; 51] (Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 246–252; cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 498–500). Wright also points out the importance of the socio-political dimension of repentance in contradistinction to later Christian understanding of it.

37 See e.g. terminology and imagery of “Abraham's bosom” (κόλπον Ἀβραάμ), the two sides of the Hades (and possibility to communicate between the two sides), and the great “chasm” (χάσμα μέγα) that divides the two sides of the Hades. It would seem odd that Luke would have introduced all of this afterlife terminology and imagery only here. After all, Luke does say a lot about afterlife and judgment and repeats much of the terminology and imagery throughout Luke–Acts.

38 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1131–1132. Herzog further points out that purple dye was not common even among the elite (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, 117–118).

39 Gildas Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 81.

40 The Rich Man's continuous feasting is pointed out by both the expression καθ' ἡμέρα but also the imperfect form of ἐνεδιδύσκετο that is combined with present participle

would have included luxury food items that were inaccessible for ordinary people.⁴¹ In stark contrast to this, Lazarus is “clothed” with sores and placed next to the Rich Man’s gate. The verb ἐβέβλητο (had been thrown) may indicate that he is crippled and therefore unable to move around on his own.⁴² The starving Lazarus is depicted as longing to satisfy his hunger (ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι) with pieces of bread⁴³ that fall from the Rich Man’s table. In addition to hunger and humiliation, he is harassed by the dogs around the Rich Man’s gate.⁴⁴ The social distinction of the two men is further pointed out by the way each is treated as they died. The Rich Man was buried while Lazarus was not.⁴⁵

In addition to the socio-economic difference between the characters, the reason for the postmortem fate of the Rich Man and Lazarus is of interest for this study, as this has been discussed by scholars and was taken up by the ordinary readers above. There are broadly two lines of interpretation among the scholars regarding this. According to one view, the reason for rejection of the Rich Man is his wealth as such.⁴⁶ Sometimes the poverty of Lazarus is explicitly brought forward as the reason for his salvation. The other view emphasizes

εὐφραινόμενος (cf. James A. Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption in Luke’s Travel Narrative*. [Biblical Interpretation Series. Vol. 88; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 135).

- 41 On the food of elite and the poor see, Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 78–79; Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Society*, 115–121; Hamel, “Poor and Poverty,” 317.
- 42 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1131.
- 43 Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 184; Hultgren thinks that there is not enough evidence for assuming this practice (*The Parables of Jesus*, 112).
- 44 There is considerable debate whether the dogs were packs of street dogs (Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 151) or guard dogs from the Rich Man’s mansion (Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through the Middle Eastern Eyes. Cultural Studies in the Gospels* [Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 2008], Kindle loc. 4686–4687). Also, some see them as friendly (Bailey, *Jesus through the Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 4686–4687) while others hostile to Lazarus (Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 151).
- 45 Snodgrass notes that the many Jews would have thought that a person who was not buried experienced the lot due to God’s curse. Nevertheless, the afterlife scene subverts this common notion (*Stories with Intent*, 425). Hultgren opines that Lazarus’ death recalls the rapture of Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11) to heaven in HB. Even if this was implied (I do not think it is), this does not seem relevant here. Hultgren’s assumption of this echo is probably influenced by the fact that he assumes Lazarus was a particularly pious individual like Enoch (cf. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 112).
- 46 See e.g. Bauckham, “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” 225–246; Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption*, 134–157; Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 114–130; Juan L. Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesús de Nazaret. Fe e ideología* (Tomo I. Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1982), 168–170.

the moral aspect of the parable. That is, it has to do with the denunciation of the wealthy who disregard the poor.⁴⁷

Richard Bauckham has argued persuasively for the first position; however, there are problematic areas in his argumentation. He correctly focuses on the reversal theme in the parable and the stark contrast of the Rich Man and Lazarus in the first part of the parable (vv. 19–25). He also points out the differences between the Egyptian folk-tale and the parable. He concludes that “the rich man suffers in the next life just because he was rich in this life, while the poor man is blessed because he was poor in this life.”⁴⁸ Luke 16:25 is the interpretative key in his assessment of the parable. As Outi Lehtipuu has correctly pointed out, however, Bauckham does not give sufficient attention to the second part of the parable.⁴⁹ He emphasizes v. 25 at the expense of the overall message of the parable. As he interprets vv. 26–31, he neglects the importance of listening to Moses and the prophets and the idea of repentance. In light of the importance given to the caring of the poor in HB (e.g. Deut 10:17–19; 24:10–22; Isa 58:5–6; Amos 8:4–6; Ps 146:7–9) and second temple Judaism (e.g. Tob 1:3; 4:7, 10–11; 12:8–10; Sir 7:10; 29:8; 29:12), it is difficult overlook this factor.⁵⁰ The connection between repentance and helping the poor is also attested elsewhere in Luke (3:7–14; 14:12–14; 18:18–30; 19:1–10). Surprisingly, Bauckham later on states that “[t]he purpose of Lazarus’ proposed visit [to Rich Man’s brothers is] . . . a powerful warning that, unless they reform their lives, they will share their brother’s fate.”⁵¹ Thus, even if Bauckham rejects the notion that the Rich Man’s fate is to be moralized, he is forced to admit that “reform” is necessary for the salvation of the five brothers. The Rich Man’s lifestyle is depicted as a negative example and of the sort that the brothers should avoid. The five brothers could evade the torment simply by repenting; however, the parable does not tell what the repentance would specifically entail for Rich Man,⁵² though some kind of aid and concern is probably implied.

47 See e.g. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 425–435; Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 163–170; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 141–159; Goulder, *Luke*, 634–639; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 183–187.

48 Bauckham, “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” 232–233.

49 Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 164–165. See also Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 604–605.

50 cf. Hamel, “Poverty and Charity,” 319–322.

51 Bauckham, “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” 243.

52 Metzger for example states that “had the rich man opened that gate and given alms to Lazarus *yet remained wealthy* [emphasis mine], he would not have improved his chances of joining Abraham” (*Wealth and Consumption*, 146). This, however, is not stated or implied in the parable or in its immediate context. Further, his reading neglects the fact that Luke

The second view regarding the reason for the postmortem fate of Lazarus and the Rich Man includes problematic areas as well. Some scholars have over-emphasized the misuse of the wealth on the part of the Rich Man⁵³ or the piety on the part of Lazarus.⁵⁴ Lazarus' name,⁵⁵ though it was probably not understood by Luke's audience, means "God helps" and seems to allude to God's care of the poor rather than his piety.⁵⁶ Despite these mistaken emphases, the parable does include a moral judgment on the Rich Man as is implied in the call of repentance to his brothers.⁵⁷ Yet, the only explicit reference for the reversal remains in 16:25 where Abraham gives the reason for the Rich Man's torment and Lazarus' bliss. The Rich Man received τὰ ἀγαθὰ (good things) in this life and now is ὀδυῖσθαι (he suffers pain). Lazarus experienced τὰ κακά (bad things) while living and is παρακαλεῖται (being comforted) in the after-life. This parallelism between the earthly life and after-life of both main characters seems to be deliberate. It points to the importance of 16:25. The challenge is how to incorporate the two important nuances; that is, the reason for reversal (16:25) and the importance of repentance in the light of Moses and the prophets (16:30–31), into a coherent interpretative whole.

As indicated earlier, even the scholars who view the parable as a unity usually place more emphasis either on the first or second part to decipher its meaning. Perhaps scholars still retain some of Jülicher's and Jeremias's "one-point-only" interpretative paradigm here.⁵⁸ On the contrary, it seems that this

depicts some followers (or sympathizers) of Jesus as having considerable amount of possessions (7:1–10; 8:3; 23:50, 55).

- 53 J. M. Derrett, "Dives and Lazarus and the Preceding Sayings," *NTS* 7 (1961): 373; Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 390; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1128–1129, 1132.
- 54 Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 112; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 632; Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 4738–4755, 4781–4789, 4813; Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 390. McMullen has noted that the silence and passivity of the poor masses in the Roman Empire was due to their lot, which they had to accept. Even though they resented the rich, there was little they felt that they could do (*Roman Social Relations*, 118–119). Thus, Lazarus' passivity in life or Hades should not be constructed as a specific sign of virtue as Bailey particularly does.
- 55 The Greek Λάζαρος is probably derived from the Hebrew לֵאזָר shortened version of לֵאזָרָא (cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1131). Some also see here an allusion to Eliezer who was Abraham's faithful servant (Gen 15:2; cf. Gen 24:2).
- 56 Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 114–115.
- 57 The narrative does not explicitly make a moral judgment on the Rich Man's (use of) wealth but it is difficult to see that the audience (Jesus' and Luke's) would not have seen him in a negative light.
- 58 Cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 11–22. He differs from Jülicher in that he rejects the idea that each parable conveys a single point of widest possible generality (*The Parables*

parable, or an exemplary story, depicts various nuances that cannot be captured into a single point or emphasis. Many scholars have pointed out that the parables often stir the imagination and subvert conventional thinking rather than convey a neat and clearly formulated message.⁵⁹ As such, this parable elicits two different aspects that cannot be neatly collapsed into one. It conveys a social message as it narrates the two socio-economic extremes and reversal that are closely connected to it (16:25). Among other things, this seems to subvert the simplistic notion that wealth per se demonstrates God's blessing and poverty a curse or misfortune. Yet, the parable does moralize and issues a call to repentance for the rich elite and perhaps also their associates.⁶⁰ The Rich Man's brothers are to listen to Moses and the prophets; and had the Rich Man done that during his lifetime he would have avoided the torment. The crucial issue is that the parable does not indicate exactly what the Rich Man should have done as a result of repentance. The fact that he should have done something to Lazarus is indicated by the message of repentance issued to the brothers. On the contrary, Lazarus' piety or lack of it is not discussed in the parable. He finds himself in bliss just for being a neglected beggar (cf. 6:20–23). Multiple texts in the HB indicate that God of the covenant comes to the aide of those who are poor, helpless, and vulnerable regardless of their explicit piety (Exod 22:22–23, 26–27; Deut 10:18; 14:28–29; 24:6, 14–15).

Thus, the parable demonstrates the reversal of fortunes and that this reversal is based at least partially on glaring social injustice (wealth and poverty) but also the way rich (and by implication powerful) live their lives. The parable was probably directed more toward the rich rather than the poor. The preceding sayings (16:1–9, 10–13, 14–16; cf. 15:11–32) and the broader theological context of Luke–Acts emphasize repentance and the importance of practical

of Jesus, 19). Jeremias states however that this parable is one of the four double-edged parables. The two “edges” in his opinion are the reversal of fortune in the after-life and the second about the five brothers (*The Parables of Jesus*, 186). The “double-edged” approach is clearly the better option and somewhat more nuanced than those that insist on a single point.

59 Crossan, *In Parables*, 53–78; on hermeneutics of parables, see Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 35–59.

60 The fact that the parable depicts two extremes does not limit the message of the parable to these two extremes. Rather, by using stark contrasts it exposes and criticizes injustice in the society. In addition, the fact that the Rich Man is extremely wealthy does not mean that lower level elites and moderately wealthy (PS3–4), would not have heard criticism of their own lifestyle or better yet their association and approval of the socio-political arrangements of the elite.

actions that follow repentance,⁶¹ and this narrative context probably would have been missing in the ministry of Jesus. The textual audience of the parable is the money-loving Pharisees and perhaps by implication the disciples. They are warned to use money “to gain friends” (16:1–9) but to avoid being φιλάργυροι (lovers of money; 16:14). There is also a connection to the previous confrontation scenes with the Pharisees (11:37–50; 13:10–17; 14:1–24), and the parable of the son who squandered his father’s property (15:1–32).⁶²

The social situation in the parable, though depicted with stark contrasts, is credible in the situation of Jesus’ life as well as later Lucan contexts. The difference between the life-style of the wealthy elite (PS1–2) and misery of the beggars (PS7), as represented by the Rich Man and Lazarus, respectively, are amply attested during an imperial period apart from this parable.⁶³ Sumptuous luxury and feasting were hallmarks of an elite lifestyle and were meant to broadcast one’s status, honor, and wealth.⁶⁴ Regardless of the fictional character of the parable, it is clear that the Rich Man is depicted as part of the urban elite who lived in a walled mansion. While differences in status and rank were generally accepted in Jewish Palestine of the first century, according to Jewish communal practice, charity was due to those in desperate need.⁶⁵ In Roman society, public charity (*munificentiae/euergesiae*) rarely included the marginal and poorest groups; however, it is clear that private individuals did give, as the presence of living beggars throughout the empire clearly attests. Though the elite rarely gave to those they considered non-deserving, pity and fear of mobs of beggars and curses moved some to give.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, there are also some examples of wealthy individuals who seemed to have advocated charity and alms-giving. One of these is Musonius Rufus (c. 30–100 CE), a stoic philosopher, who taught that one should help others even to the point of denouncing excessive possession.⁶⁷ Despite some notable exceptions, charity seems to have been mainly practiced by the non-elite, especially when it did not include patronage or bolstering of the elite honor/status.⁶⁸

61 Cf. Guy D. Nave, *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 184–191.

62 The clearest textual link is ἐπιθύμει/ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι (15:16; 16:21).

63 See e.g. McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 1–27, 57–120; Garnsey and Saller, *Roman Society*, 148–158.

64 McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 88–120.

65 Hamel, “Poverty and Charity,” 319–322; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 108–115.

66 Parkin, “You do Him No Service,” 60–82; see also Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 60–107.

67 See Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 83–85; See also Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 71, 77–115.

68 Parkin, “You Do Him No Service,” 60–70.

Thus, the message of the parable to Luke's audience included a strong moral indictment on the wealthy and a call to show compassion toward the poor. Even if charity among the wealthy toward the destitute were not common in the Greco-Roman cultural environment, the previous sections of the gospel about the importance of sharing possessions (e.g. 1:51–52; 12:13–21, 32–34; 14:12–14) already would have had a strong impact on them. Jewish notions of charity and sporadic examples in the Greco-Roman contexts would have also loomed at the background. The rhetoric of the parable does not specify whether the Rich Man was to divest himself completely (cf. 14:33; 18:18–30) or share only part of his possessions (cf. 8:3; 19:1–10). The nature of parabolic speech leaves this open to the hearers, and the lack of specific doctrine or consistent formula in Luke–Acts provides little guidance. Regardless of the amount, repentance would be required. This probably implied giving up the sumptuous lifestyle of the wealthy and the snobbery⁶⁹ attached to it, which is portrayed in the first part of the parable (16:19). Further, as Bauckham has noted, the parable is also a critique of the flagrant injustices of the society.⁷⁰ The use of extremes in the parable highlights the unjust arrangements of the entire society and God's condemnation of it vis-à-vis the Rich Man (and his five brothers). Thus, the parable addressed more than just individuals, especially in the Western sense. This is also evident in the inclusion of the Rich Man's five brothers into the story⁷¹ and can be further deduced from the importance of family and kinship connections in the ancient Mediterranean world.⁷² Thus, in a sense, the parable addressed one family but at the same time was a social critique of the larger circles of the wealthy (cf. 14:12–14). They were invited not only to share their resources and change their lifestyle but also to recognize the needs of the poor and needy among them if they were to attain the eschatological banquet. At the same time, the simplistic notion of wealth and possessions as signs of God's favor is undermined. Thus, it also subverts the religious ideology that connects wealth and possessions as God's favor too hastily.

69 On the snobbery of the elite (and snobbery vocabulary) that was generally considered to display or enhance one's status, see McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 57–62, 91–120, 138–141.

70 Bauckham, "Rich Man and Lazarus," 31–36.

71 Cf. Heil, *The Meal Scenes*, 140.

72 Malina, *The New Testament World*, 94–121; McMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 106–113; on the importance of Josephus' family prestige see, e.g. *Life*, 1–2.

6.3 Toward a Critical Dialogue: Reading Luke 16:19–31 Across Contexts

As was the case with the previous analyses, despite their differences, the readings of the Bolivian groups and that of the biblical scholars do have points of contact. Bolivian readers spent considerable time comparing the conditions of the Rich Man and Lazarus (esp. the MG) and the reasons for the postmortem fate of both characters. It became clear that the MG focused more energy and space on the condition of Lazarus than the PG.⁷³ As many scholars have correctly indicated, the parable in its Lucan context is addressed to the wealthy rather than the poor. In that sense, it comes as no surprise that the PG paid less attention to Lazarus. This emphasis lends further credibility to the idea that the parable was directed primarily to the rich (PS₃) and perhaps also to the aspiring middling sections (PS₄) in Luke's audience.

Perhaps a more interesting question would be to imagine how the poorer members in Luke's (and Jesus') audience would have heard the parable. John Glen correctly points out that the parable does not encourage the resignation of the poor to their lot and that Lazarus is not depicted as being rewarded in the after-life for remaining silent.⁷⁴ Thus, it should not be considered to support the Marxist notion of "opium to the people" as such. As Juanita in the PG stated, however, there is a possibility that the poor might not have "an attitude that overcomes" and thus "conform to the sores." Her comments imply that the parable may have or at least might be misused to "silence" the poor. Some in the MG did view the conditions of the rich and poor as predetermined by God but nobody explicitly stated that this would equal resignation or despair.⁷⁵ On the contrary, the pastor (MG) emphasized personal responsibility⁷⁶ and stated that had the Rich Man lived by biblical principles,⁷⁷ Lazarus' life would have been better. Even though the pastor laid emphasis on personal

73 Herzog is one of the few scholars who pays considerable attention to Lazarus and his fate (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, 114–130). Many scholars consider Lazarus as secondary to the story.

74 John S. Glen, *The Parables of Conflict in Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), 68–69.

75 Certainly the joyous celebrations of the community's worship services militate against the mentality of resignation or despair.

76 "decision rests on oneself" (Pastor, MG).

77 The pastor does not explain what he means by "biblical principles" or what these principles imply. However, the general idea seems to include actions that would improve the life of Lazarus, such as inviting him to eat with him. This would seem to mean more than just feeding; rather, it appears to imply social relations and deeper connection than just giving bread.

responsibility, he also acknowledged that Lazarus' fate would have taken a turn for the better had the Rich Man changed. Thus, the emphasis in their reading is laid upon the Rich Man's ability to bring about transformation. Curiously, the group did not draw a similar conclusion in their own life. That is, if the rich today were to live according to God's principles, their own (i.e., MG group's) life would change for the better. Despite this, the pastor's comment regarding the Rich Man and Lazarus in the text probably is reflective of the present-day situation, though nobody drew the above implication from it. It is noteworthy that this discussion emerged in the socio-economically marginalized context rather than the privileged one. In general, the parable prompted reflection on the justice of God, critique of the rich, and the possibilities of transformation. While this does not necessarily mean that the poor and destitute in Luke's audience would have pondered about the same issues, it is not impossible that the parable would have raised similar sentiments in them. At least some parts of the HB (and earlier sections of Luke's gospel) would have lent support to the notion of God's justice and critique of the rich, as the parable itself points to the importance of hearing (correctly) Moses and the prophets.

As pointed out earlier in the historical reading, the silence of Lazarus in the parable is hardly a sign of piety but rather the only viable option for a destitute person in the ancient world.⁷⁸ This probably would have been the general attitude of the poorer members in Luke's audience as well. Juana (MG), however, was impressed by how God received Lazarus and how the Rich Man was left out. The notion of action-consequence theology was almost completely absent in both groups' readings.⁷⁹ Luke's audience might have also noticed the reversal theme of the parable, particularly how Lazarus was given the place of honor in Abraham's bosom. The idea that wealth cannot be regarded automatically as God's blessing (luck/fate) and poverty as curse (misfortune), would probably have been evident as well. The parable seems to address this issue rather directly regardless of whether one places the emphasis on the first or second part of the parable. The subversion of the traditional idea of retribution seems to be linked to Juana's comment above and could have been encouraging to members in Luke's audience.

The PG also pointed out the fact that miracles do not lead people to repentance or to Christian faith. This was probably a conclusion based partially on the parable's emphasis of the theme but was also echoed in the stories of the miraculous in the experience of the Pentecostal community, as the examples

78 It is also noteworthy that according PG Lazarus was pious because he did not complain but MG (e.g., Daniel) explicitly confessed ignorance regarding Lazarus' piety. After all, stated Daniel, Lazarus focused on survival rather than other things.

79 Pastor (MG) refers to it only once in rather general terms.

showed. In many scholarly readings, the contrast between obedience to Moses and the prophets and rejection of miracles play an important part as well.⁸⁰

While it is difficult evaluate to what extent the notion of hearing the parable “through the ears of the marginalized” above contained any new perspectives, two closely related details emerged that are only cursorily found in the research literature.⁸¹ Both are connected to the Rich Man’s dialogue with Abraham. Both Bolivian groups pointed out the close familiarity of the Rich Man and Lazarus. *Pastora* (MG) specifically stated that the only person (out of many) the Rich Man saw and knew in Abraham’s bosom was Lazarus. This was connected to the men’s physical proximity during their lifetime. While this might be a small detail, by implication it points out that all of the Rich Man’s dead relatives and rich acquaintances (cf. 14:12–14) were in torment. The detail would then highlight the social and collective aspect of the parable. The Rich Man’s elite social network thus cannot be summoned to help him in the afterlife. Also, the five living brothers are depicted to follow suit shortly after unless they hearken the Law and the prophets.

The other peculiar comment came from Juana (PG):

He [the Rich Man] asked for Abraham and didn’t call to God. He calls out to Abraham, was it because he was his equal? Abraham was his equal so let’s see how we can negotiate this thing, right?

Here Juana points out how the Rich Man tried to bargain his way out of Hades. While many scholars have noticed the arrogant attitude of the Rich Man as he talks to Abraham and demands that Lazarus is sent to serve him, the idea of negotiating with Abraham has been pointed out only by few.⁸² Just as bribes and corruption were common during the first century Roman Empire,⁸³ so it is in present-day Bolivia.⁸⁴ Juana’s comment further highlights the corrupt character of the Rich Man and the permanence of the Rich Man’s punishment.

80 See e.g. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 187.

81 Here by “research literature,” I mean those books found in the bibliography. It is of course possible that other scholars have pointed out the “novelties” that I point out here. Even if that were the case, the wit and creativity of the ordinary readers is important and noteworthy.

82 Pheme Perkins, *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 70–71; Herzog seems to follow her (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, 124–130).

83 The elite knew well that if they committed a serious crime, banishment, rather than capital punishment, followed. In addition, banishment was often only for a time and not *ad infinitum* (cf. Musonius Rufus was exiled three times during his lifetime).

84 Iriarte, *Análisis crítico de la realidad*, 500–507. This socio-political aspect might have also helped the group discern this point.

Finally, the difference between the scholarly and ordinary reader's method and purpose are considerable. While an ecclesiastic reading has traditionally focused on the detailed afterlife imagery,⁸⁵ a large number of critical scholars have concentrated on finding ancient parallels to the parable. Overall, an enormous amount of scholarly literature has been dedicated to the search for suitable parallels. This undoubtedly has both helped and confused the interpretation. It has helped contextualize the parable in its proper cultural and historical milieu but also unnecessarily split it into two parts.⁸⁶ As was the case with the beatitudes and woes, biblical scholars also have been reluctant to ponder the present-day implication of their historical readings and thus have concentrated even less on the ways the parable might be appropriated presently. Even so, there are exceptions to this, notably by those who favor liberation hermeneutics.⁸⁷ And, at least some are insisting that scholars need to be more open to the politics and ethics of interpretation.⁸⁸ Overall, academic biblical scholars write to fellow scholars, ask historical and abstract questions, and avoid popular audiences, even if the scholarly interests and methods have changed considerably over the past hundred years. In this sense, it must be admitted that biblical scholarship is not homogenous. In terms of historical biblical scholarship, there is no consensus on the meaning of the parable, though the majority would see the "critique of the Rich Man" in one way or another as the gist of the parable.

The Bolivian readers' hermeneutical approach paid little attention to the historical or cultural environment of the parable. The text and life- horizons were fused with ease and the purpose of the reading was practical rather than theoretical. No one method emerged and thus method was not discussed. Imagination played an important role, especially in the reading of the MG. This helped the group enter the story world and make it their own; there was no pretention of objectivity or detachment. The MG also emphasized the con-

85 For representative comments on the history of Christianity, see Arthur Just, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament III. Luke* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2003), 259–264; Cf. also Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 3–4.

86 This split is usually traced back to Jülicher though the search for historical parallels is not found in Jülicher as such (Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery*, 1–38).

87 While this remains a general tendency, many scholars do not identify themselves with a liberationist paradigm explicitly, while others are influenced by it in greater or lesser degree. Further, one can use a number of interpretative approaches (socio-historical, literary, postmodernist, postcolonial, etc.) and include liberationist tendencies in one's reading.

88 E.g. Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethics*; Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1995).

crete and material aspects of the parable and this led to a digression on practical theodicy and critique of the rich. Appropriation was an integral part of the reading process and was never lost during the process. The PG allegorized somewhat more than the MG and focused on the negative attitude of the Rich Man and drew spiritual lessons from the text. Wealth and possessions were not seen as problematic *per se*; rather, the callousness of the Rich Man was emphasized throughout the reading.

While close (*minutiae*) reading of the text played a greater role in the scholarly readings of the parable, the discussion on action-consequence theology that was prominent in the readings of the previous passages (esp. Luke 6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:12–14) was notably absent in this reading. It is notable because both groups tended to default on this idea on several occasions (cf. readings of 6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:12–14) without explicit connection to the text.⁸⁹ Its visible absence in the reading of this parable (16:19–31) is an indication that the text was considered important as such, and that the default action-consequence theology is not read each and every time into the text. Perhaps action-consequence theology is less evident in the parable.

Finally, the social location again seemed to play an important part in the way the parable was interpreted and the conclusions that were drawn. The concrete comments on poverty (e.g., Juana in MG), contrasting of one's own life with the Rich Man (e.g., Daniel in MG), and partial identification with Lazarus (e.g., Daniel and Rosa in MG) make this conclusion plausible.⁹⁰ The extent to which scholarly readings are influenced by social location is more difficult to say since concrete data is missing. Nevertheless, it is probably safe to assume that most, if not all, biblical scholars who live in Europe and North America enjoy at least relative affluence. The attention that many (not all) scholars pay to Lazarus' alleged piety and the Rich Man's overt misuse of riches inevitably might reflect the affluence of Western scholarly enterprise. That is, the Rich Man's sinfulness and Lazarus' piety are exaggerated as reasons for their postmortem fate. Similarly, the social and collective dimensions of the parable do not receive much attention. With the lack of any more specific data, this conclusion obviously remains a conjecture. Finally, the focus of biblical scholarship on aspects that are behind the text rather than in front of it is probably a legacy of the academic and ecclesiastical tradition as well as the social location of Western biblical interpreters.

89 I suggested earlier that possibly the catchword "blessed" might have drawn the Bolivian groups' attention to action-consequence theology.

90 It is noteworthy that PG did not identify in any way with Lazarus or with the Rich Man.

Analysis of Ordinary and Scholarly Readings of Luke 19:1–10

The story about Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) concludes the section that deals with detailed analyses of Bolivian readers and historical scholarly readings of biblical texts. The format of the chapter follows the previous sections.

7.1 Empirical Reading of Luke 19:1–10

7.1.1 *Socio-Economically Marginalized Group's Reading of Luke 19:1–10*

7.1.1.1 Possessions and Social Status

The socio-economically marginalized group focused on the character and status of Zacchaeus, who was seen as evil, corrupt, and very rich by the participants.

Marcos: He was a corrupt man because he was a tax collector and all that, right? . . . he repented . . . and began to give all of his money . . . because he had it hidden in the walls.

Javier: It was even worse since he was rich. If we have on our street let's say a person who has [a house of] seven stories and I have only one story;¹ and I know that he is the one who takes my taxes; and one has hatred and so the tiger is going to eat him one day . . . or people . . . hated him and he had certainly received death threats many times . . . he was not liked.

Pastora: They hated him because of the way he acted; they knew what he was doing, he was pocketing [people's money].

Marcos: He had a bad reputation.

1 From my observation, the number of stories (or the size of the house in general) was somewhat of a status symbol, especially in a section of town where there was little space to expand to any other direction. I had a chance to visit a home in a rather poor area that had four stories but each story had only one or two small rooms. Many people in the congregation seemed to be marveling at the house.

Juana: Everyone knew that he was evil.

Marcos: Yes, corrupt.

Juana: He was taking money from the poor.

Marcos: Corrupt, he was plundering them.

Some added another dimension to Zacchaeus' character that reflected his stature and appearance.

Pastor: It says that he was rich . . . I read one secular book that tells the story of Zacchaeus and it says that he was small with a deformed hunchback . . . a midget like a demijohn . . . And despite this deficiency the Bible says that he was rich.

Daniel: Despite the fact that he was leader and thief . . . despite these deficiencies . . . like the pastor said a man, hunchback of Notre Dan . . . I love Zacchaeus' attitude.

Zacchaeus was also likened to corrupt politicians in Bolivia.

Rosa: . . . like we saw earlier we were talking about the rich, sick [and] here the second time is rich sinner, a publican . . . and a politician on top of that.

When the group was asked who were the "Zachaeuses" of today, many group members pointed to the politicians.²

Pastor: Mayor, politicians . . .

Marcos: [President] Evo Morales . . .

Pastora: Mayor, prefects [local leaders] . . .

Marcos: The authorities . . .

² As earlier, the fact that I asked the group a question that distinguished the "then" and "now" aspects did not mean that there was a neat separation between the horizons at any point.

Juana: Those who govern the country . . .

Marcos: They are the most corrupt.

Reflection on Zacchaeus' character and status prompted discussions on corruption and money in the lived experience of the group. Though the discussion focused on the church and politicians, corruption was seen as an all-encompassing fact that one could not escape.

Pastor: Unfortunately Bolivia, it is the world's runner-up, runner-up of corruption in the world. Therefore, we all take money, we take [whether] pastors, priests, presidents etc. etc. . . . You were in Bolivia with Pastor Carlos? Aii . . . certainly [he is] corrupt! So it is the concept of Bolivia that everything is corrupt, not only politicians but also the ecclesiastic class . . . I think that definitively there is corruption in our society . . . we do not make much of it. It's like somebody said, "For a fortune the monkey dances . . . for money a crook becomes a missionary."³

Pastor continued to give a more concrete example of corruption within the church.

Pastor: I give you an example. We work in the soup kitchen, we have the food kitchen. There is a company that gives us eggs, eggs for the children, not for the pastor . . . for the children . . . and I was given an invitation because Shakira comes and this company gives me the invitation that I take one person and two children to see the concert . . . there are a number of pastors who have a soup kitchen and we all receive the tickets. I get hold of the spouse of one sister and he takes two children from the soup kitchen . . . the same tickets are given to another pastor. He sells the ticket . . . they cost about 800 bolivianos (Bs).⁴ He sold the tickets [Marcos: he received 1600 Bs.]. They knew about it there that he sold the tickets . . . what happens to the rest of the pastors? Yes, it does affect [us].

Pastora: One feels impotent; one cannot do anything, cannot . . .

Marcos: For one [person], everybody pays for the broken plates, everybody pays.

³ In Spanish, "por plata baila el mono . . . por dinero el ratero se hace misionero."

⁴ 800 Bs. is about \$114 (April 2013).

Juana: It is unjust

Corruption at the government level was seen as something that affected the Catholic Church but might also affect the evangelical churches in the near future.

Pastora: I heard in TV that the president wants Catholic and Evangelical churches to give tithes [to the government].⁵ And one pastor said to give to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God what is God's . . . this is what it said in the news.

Pablo: Yes, what happens like Santa Cruz, it is powerful in business and the majority of people in Santa Cruz are Catholics and some months ago it was said that one priest in Cochabamba used children to traffic drugs. Then the president did not like this . . . the vice-president started to attack the Catholic Church . . . Now he gave an ordinance to the Catholic Church here; to meddle with the Evangelicals he also has his profits . . . Because in reality we don't have to give them because it is not for the state. Our tithes are for God and not for the government that tried to meddle with Evangelical church as well.

Daniel: It is also [clock on the wall starts beeping] I say . . . the church has a partial blame because if these things are given, it's because the church has been indifferent to the things of God. The church forgot God . . . Then now everything rebounds because it says that God sets up governments and pulls them down. So I think it is a time in which the church . . . is going through difficult times in this sense because the church has gone away from God.

It was interesting to note that an evangelical pastor,⁶ according to *pastora's* report, was supporting the government's policy of taxing the churches and

5 For a report and brief analysis on the "Church taxes," see <http://www.fmbolivia.net/noticia18899-iglesia-catlica-advierte-que-para-el-pago-de-impuestos-se-debe-romper-acuerdos-entre-bolivia-y-el-vaticano.html> and <http://www.hoybolivia.com/Noticia.php?IdNoticia=41821>. It seemed that the primary target of this taxation was the Catholic Church, at least according to the articles.

6 Though *pastora* did not explicitly state that he was *evangélico*, it seemed to be so since she was talking about "a pastor" as if he were part of "us."

used the often-quoted saying of Jesus to support it.⁷ In addition, Daniel's comments regarding the churches' partial blame in the matter reflected the action-consequence theology. The church had been indifferent to the things of God and that was why it was going through difficult times. That is, the current corrupt government was in place and harassed the Evangelicals due to the fact that they had strayed from God. Daniel did not indicate, however, what this "going away from God" consisted of in particular.

Corruption also affected the workplace. One who did not take part in the corruption was ostracized socially and was given the hardest and most difficult tasks.

Pastor: Now in the workplace . . . you think of doing the right thing . . . then the others are used to doing the bad thing . . . they banish you from their group . . . they make your job really hard. Also, in schools . . .

In light of the comments above it is hardly surprising that the corruption is seen as something inescapable in society and church at all levels. The group saw itself as powerless in many respects as they voiced their critique of these evils in society and church. One of the few things that the group felt they could do to combat the corruption was to do the right thing. God would then reward this. Reading about Zacchaeus and his position as a corrupt and rich politician prompted a discussion that was both relevant and important for the group. However, despite the many comments on Zacchaeus' status and corruption, the main focus was on the transformation that took place in Zacchaeus' life according to the narrative.

7.1.1.2 Salvation and Benefit

The whole group agreed that Zacchaeus had experienced a dramatic transformation. It affected his whole life as well as the community to which he belonged.

Marcos: He was a corrupt man . . . and he repented of all that he had done when Jesus entered his house and he started, there were people outside, and he started to give all of his money . . . because he had hidden money inside his walls . . . he took all and started to give it [away]. Even to the way he was or let's say he changed radically.

7 There seems to be a reference to Matt 22:21 and parallels.

Daniel: Like Zacchaeus converted and he gives three times more like the pastor said; this is crazy. Instead of giving back the just [amount], good, but he says I am going to give [back] three times [as much]. If I robbed you 50 . . . I'm going to give you back 200.

Pastora: He [Jesus] demonstrated that he came to search for people who truly needed him, this people; for example, the Pharisees they knew the word but they did nothing of what they knew. They did everything to the contrary and when salvation came, when Jesus came, they remained like that then.

Daniel: For those who believed exactly for them [noise on the background] . . . but he focused more on those people who desired him. For the depreciated people that have no value, that nobody in the society would accept or contrary to all logic let's say. It's like what happens today in the churches.

In fact, the change that Zacchaeus went through was so drastic that, according to some in the group, it was difficult for people around to believe it.

Daniel: Uff, to the extent that he gave back. It was not a [mere] story and also people saw his conversion and then the people, after having received the showing [of transformation], now if we had not seen [the change] we would not have believed. I tell you that Zacchaeus returned them everything, three times more to those he had robbed. Imagine . . . they were surprised of the change that Zacchaeus had. And now for being surprised also many converted to the Lord . . . Jesus broke the whole paradigm that people had . . . because people were saying how this person goes to the house of this guy; this person is a crook, he's just going to rob more from him.

Marcos: I say he changed, right? His life [changed] radically, right? And he started to give back everything that he had robbed. They did not believe, right? Because he had caused much [evil] there . . . he started to give back.

In addition to the change that took place in Zacchaeus' life, the whole community benefitted from the transformation.

Rosa: Like he had, he received salvation. Also they the people received of the joy that he receive . . . or let's say money . . . four times of what had

been robbed. So, Zacchaeus demonstrated to the community and the community benefitted when he received salvation.

Marcos: Because he was a corrupt man . . . he repented from everything that he had done when Jesus entered his house . . . and started to give all of his money . . . started to give . . . he changed radically.

Daniel: For these depreciated people that have no value that nobody in the society would accept or no logic let's say. Like what happens in the church today . . . He [Jesus] preached with his life . . . he lifted the morale of the people very high and above all he exalted his love to people as well.

As can be seen from the examples above, the salvation of Zacchaeus did not only touch his whole life but also the life of his household and the whole community.

7.1.1.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As in the earlier readings, the interpretative horizons were fused without concern for possible differences between historical context and readers' present-day contexts. Even so, the group members occasionally were able to keep the story line separate from their own reality. Also, the story and the ensuing dialogue prompted a discussion about corruption in all levels of society, as was indicated in an earlier section. The group felt helpless to address the issue apart from the perspective of personal transformation and small-scale efforts to reach out to their immediate community and sphere of influence.⁸ One of the issues that surfaced once again was the action-consequence theology; however, this time it was even more clearly connected to the idea of justice.

Pastor: We continue with the donation of eggs, we continue with the donation of product that they gave us there but the other people no longer have that blessing.⁹ So, it may seem in that moment that they won; that is the corrupt [people won]. It may seem that in that moment they

8 The church's active evangelistic campaigns (i.e., recruiting new members and converts) elsewhere in the city and the surrounding villages (and connections to other similar communities), however, actually indicated that the little community had much wider influence than just their small congregation.

9 The Pastor was referring back to the pastor and his associates who sold the Shakira concert tickets and pocketed the money.

moved ahead. The thing is that afterwards there is someone who is watching, He who is just.

The pastor made a connection between the continuation of donations and the correct actions on behalf of his church; the corrupt pastor who had misused donations no longer received the benefits. The result was attributed to God's justice. Though there was a perceived delay or a waiting period, God saw what happened and rewarded the faithful.

In addition, the action-consequence theology seemed to be a great motivating force to do the right thing.

Daniel: This affects me. It motivates me to do the right thing in the things of God because there is a great gain in doing the right thing . . . it motivates me to live a pure life before God and other people.

Pastor: Love above all things. This is what it needs to be . . . it is the only way we can reap in abundance . . . if there is no love I think it will all end in nothing and nothing will change. So I need to love myself, love the people, love God so that things will be greatly changed, right?

Though the notion of rewards is obvious here, again, the specifics are not spelled out, as can be seen in Daniel's rather general remarks.

Zacchaeus's change also prompted reflection on how one needs to demonstrate that the transformation is genuine.

Pastora: We need to change the attitude, all of us then. So that they see that we have truly changed, like Zacchaeus did. He changed the attitude.

Pastor: Now the other thing is that . . . that is the gospel, the gospel is a change of attitude. For example, if I was a drug addict, I had long nails they were cut . . . the one who cut then was the Lord. This is the change of attitude . . . this is what happened to Zacchaeus.

Marcos: More than anything else, to share [and] not to think of ourselves right? But to think of other people and like you say the community like Zacchaeus did so that they would be saved. If God puts us in *barrio* or a community, I think it is for something. It is to influence it so that they know, like we know, they would know God and they would have salvation; so to attract attention . . .

Overall, it can be seen that the text prompted reflection on the character of Zacchaeus and the way he was transformed. While nobody in the group personally identified with Zacchaeus or his experience, the story and particularly his corrupt character were taken as points of contact for present-day reflection. In this way, the story was transferred and relocated to the readers' current situation. The group gave numerous illustrations of corruption in church and society and felt helpless to change it. Faith in God's ability to transform a person's life, however, was seen as vital for the life of an individual, community, and by implication, society. Yet, even some people in the church practiced corruption. Thus, the correct conduct was seen as quite important and action-consequence theology gave a strong impetus for this. In a sense then, as the group perceived it, action-consequence theology could be said to function as a positive force in individual and communal transformation. From a different perspective, it was a logical deduction of God's justice in the here and now.

The transformation of Zacchaeus from a corrupt person into a generous person who followed Jesus was seen as a model for the group. Though the group believed that radical transformation was and is possible, the genuineness of change needed to be demonstrated through a changed attitude and accompanying actions. Thus, the story of Zacchaeus was read in light of the present-day experience of corruption and transformation in the community's experience. There seemed to be little desire to know details about Roman taxation, toll collection, or other extra-textual details.¹⁰ It was more important to them to use the imagination and an exposition of the present context to find meaning in the text.¹¹ It is difficult to know to what extent the characterization of Zacchaeus was drawn from the group's ecclesiastic tradition and to what extent the wealth and corruption of Zacchaeus were automatically linked due to the groups' own experience of social exclusion and marginalization. Since the group laid great emphasis on relating stories and personal experiences of corruption, however, the latter options seems to be the more important factor even if the two can hardly be neatly separated.

10 Even so, it seemed to me that my short comments on Zacchaeus as the chief toll collector and the Roman tax farming system were perhaps the most useful historical comments throughout the readings.

11 For example, the way Zacchaeus started ripping money out of the walls of his house to hand it over to the people; Zacchaeus' physical description as a hunchback; the hatred of people toward Zacchaeus (e.g., death threats). The quotes earlier illustrate the use of imagination more fully.

7.1.2 *Privileged Group's Reading of Luke 19:1–10*

7.1.2.1 Possessions and Social Status

The privileged group also focused on the character of Zacchaeus as a corrupt and evil person who collaborated with the Romans.

Pastora: That man had power, he had riches . . . he was a leader and he had power, status, and riches.

Ruben: He had power, he was rich and—

Rosita: —and he was a liar and thief, right?

Juana: They thought that he was a person and that he was collaborating in collecting taxes with the empire that was ruling, right?

Pastor: Traitor . . .

Juana: Traitor and also that he benefitted from these taxes and also he took more, he took more money from them . . . he was on the side of the empire.

José read the text and particularly Zacchaeus' character in light of corruption in Bolivia.

He blackmailed, he blackmailed, he blackmailed because those pigs¹² in the immigration don't know the papers; they don't know the papers [before] somebody puts down the money, right? Has anybody been blackmailed? For those pigs that somebody may be put to jail because one has not given money. They are real pigs really! Of this sort, these are also in the jail. They won't let people bring help . . . they don't let them leave until they see the money. This is Zacchaeus. He was a pig! And the people despised him. That's why it is said that Zacchaeus collects taxes . . . So this is not something romantic. They hated him because he was an opportunist . . . Zacchaeus the pig! There are lots of these in Bolivia.

José also connected the physical description of Zacchaeus with his character in a rather unusual way.

12 Spanish *perro* could be translated here in multiple ways and in a more vulgar manner than I have chosen here.

The Lord does not mention his stature for nothing . . . despite having all the money and . . . belonging to the empire, I think that he had this background [in that] the short ones unfortunately tend to be more perverse than the rest. . . it is interesting this social background . . . short people are teased more than the rest. Why? Because they are short and they are given hard time [for it] . . . I think that [from] this . . . originally come the most vengeful reaction and so it happens in life, right?

José continues his exposition and mentions the culpability of the society and the calculated reaction of Zacchaeus to Jesus.

He [Luke] mentions to show this, because the society is responsible for the evil that happens. It is not like that anymore . . . he [Zacchaeus] made them suffer . . . When Jesus comes what happens with these people . . . This guy [Zacchaeus] has then changed the law but also this guy was a good negotiator because it says: I'm going to give half of my goods . . . fifty percent and from what is left it was thought that he was a trickster and the rest, remember that he says that he gives four times to those who he had robbed. Fifty percent and four times and still the guy was left with leftovers. He was also astute, interesting to note this, right? He was a good businessman. He must have left something for his retirement because he certainly was not going to continue collecting taxes.

Ruben: He was not making tables to control how much I am left with . . .

José: No, no, no, I am not saying that he was not touched. I am saying that from the fifty percent and from the other fifty percent there was enough to compensate to all who he had robbed. So he was a good businessman . . . he was intelligent, not a fanatic . . . But a person of such intelligence does not have room for the gospel of the fanatics. But there was room in him and he took action . . . so this is what impresses me how the Lord changed such a person who originally must have been resentful that he had a chance to take vengeance on everybody and he took revenge on everyone [but] he was changed completely.

José's comments demonstrated an interesting and creative way of reading Zacchaeus' character and actions. In his view, Zacchaeus was touched and transformed by Jesus. His response was generous but it was also an indication

of his practical wisdom as he was left with some possessions to retire from his toll-collecting career. The linkage between physical stature and vengeance is rather unusual as well.

The group discussed corruption in Bolivia and some also shared their personal experiences in regards to corruption.

Carina: To me it seems for example [that] the police force or the system that controls security . . . they are the most corrupt.

Pastora: The theme of justice here at least one has to defend the poor, those who do not have [anything]. They are the ones who, as he said, are robbed . . . we heard of a lawyer women to who somebody paid to say a lie against a foreigner who was a prisoner in jail . . . so this corrupt system, justice . . .

Pastor: They buy people to testify for money, right?

Ruben: We almost lost our house . . . the lawyers made a deal to compete to get money from us . . . we were eight years in the court and finally we let go of our lawyer and we had to pay money on top of this even though he had taken the papers of the house. They were blackmailing us with these papers so that we would give them money—eight years in court and we paid and we paid and finally we said that this has to end. We had to pay \$6,000 to return the papers . . . we also paid \$5,000 so that we can leave the house . . . this was in 1987 . . . so that corrupt judicial system . . .

Ruben: One must leave all this behind because the Lord helped us out of this. But eight years in court . . .

Finally, the group also discussed briefly how corruption is found in other countries.¹³ José highlighted the lack of social services in United States.

José: But the medical social security in United States is horrible also. If you do not have money you are doomed. If you do not have basic,

13 The discussion ranged from the history of U.S. judicial system to the recent incidents at the time in which WWF's honorary president King Juan Carlos of Spain went to Africa to hunt elephants. On King Juan Carlos' elephant hunting trip in Botswana, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18942736>.

the basic social security all that there is in social security is [that it is] full of people.

7.1.2.2 Salvation and Benefit

As with the MG's reading, the PG group also paid much attention to the transformation of Zacchaeus' life in the narrative. The change was particularly noteworthy due to Zacchaeus' corruption; however, some were also surprised that he had a desire to see Jesus.

José: He [Zacchaeus] was intelligent, he was not a fanatic... what impresses me is how the Lord transforms people. A person who originally had to be resentful... and had taken vengeance on everybody was totally changed...

Rosita: —salvation, like I read. How his salvation affects his priorities and values [and] how they were changed.

Pastor: I see the expectation that he had in Jesus Christ. Perhaps he never thought... that what produced this change was the Holy Spirit... But he never thought of repenting... I think that Jesus saw, he saw his heart... the attitude... he had this expectation to see it and... only his presence produced the repentance, right?

Juanita: And as he knew it was necessary that he goes out because it was necessary that I stay in your house. So the presence had to enter Zacchaeus' house.

According to the pastor and Juanita, the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus was seen as the key factor that brought about the change.

Though Zacchaeus was seen as corrupt and evil, he also had persistence, which contributed to his salvation.

Pastora: Obstacles did not bother him... small of stature; people did not let him see [Jesus]. He said: "I'm going get to know Jesus." He climbed up and overcame the obstacles.

Ruben: He had power and he was rich and—

Rosa: —and a thief...

Ruben: And with [expensive] brand name clothes let's say . . . super elegant man climbing a tree for everybody to laugh at, right? But he had a desire to see Jesus.

Pastor: For some \$10,000, I may have climbed a tree [laughter].

Pastora: It's like saying . . . look, Juan is walking naked and Zacchaeus is midget in size but everyone found out something to laugh at.

Juana: Or when he has the attitude of going to seek Jesus and climb a tree. And the people are looking at him seeing a leading person, an eminent person and he has to climb a tree. Because he could have sent the guards, bring them here and I talk with him privately.

The group had a keen sense of honor-shame¹⁴ dynamics, which enabled them to highlight this peculiar aspect of the story. They appreciated Zacchaeus' persistence and desire to overcome the obstacle that the mocking crowd presented to him.

Another important aspect of salvation that the group highlighted was Zacchaeus' repentance and the actions that followed it.

Pastora: Repentance has an action. He repented but not only with his mouth. Aaah, I repent, he repented but the one who I have cheated or if I have deceived somebody I give back. He repented, he took action.

Juana: There was repentance on his part. There had been a change of attitude and to give back for what he had done or let's say he restored what he had done. So, this generated in the community I imagine a new impact. He did not just say I am saved but he returned what he had stolen. Overall, the group focused on the transformation of Zacchaeus' life, which was due to the gracious presence of Jesus.

7.1.2.3 Exegetico-Hermeneutical Approach

As before, the group did not focus on making a formal distinction between the historical context and their present-day situation. At times, however, some group members highlighted the different interpretative horizons. For example,

14 Honor and shame are important cultural values in eastern Bolivia (see, e.g., Waldmann, *El hábitus Camba*, 135–137, 277–283).

Zacchaeus was seen as a traitor of Jewish people for collaborating with the Romans in collecting the taxes. Yet, in the majority of the cases, Zacchaeus's corrupt practices were read in light of current corruptive practices in Bolivia. Thus, the horizons were merged without difficulties, which was highlighted particularly by José as he juxtaposed Zacchaeus and the Bolivian immigration officers.

As in the earlier readings, the use of imagination probably was one of the most important tools for deciphering the meaning of the text. José's creative characterization of Zacchaeus combined socio-psychological analysis and critique of the corrupt practices of the present-day Bolivia. Others in the group shared this critique, which was further highlighted using personal experiences and practical examples. Another aspect that underscored the interpretative usefulness of the imagination was Zacchaeus's tree climbing venture. The group astutely pointed out the honor-shame dynamics of the episode, which they understood from their own cultural dynamics. It would have been impossible for Zacchaeus to escape the ridicule and jeers of the crowd when he was discovered.¹⁵

As the group shared their experiences, it became clear that corruption was pervasive in Bolivia. This seemed to be one of the reasons why the group was also amazed by the way Zacchaeus was transformed, about which José was particularly impressed. He also opined, however, that due to corruption in Bolivia, God was the [only] one who could bring about change in the current situation.

Salvation is that everybody would be transformed. It is what really transforms . . . it remains the only way to change things. Beyond all revolutions what can we do about justice, of all this? Really all of us believe the same but only the Lord is going to be able to bring this change, right? The difference between socialist system and the corrupt capitalist of the sort is no longer [evident] because there is no difference, right?

Even though he saw great hope in transformation through salvation, José's comments were rather pessimistic. He further mentioned the difficulties of translating the message into concrete actions.

This is clear for us but this does not move us into action. The action is dragging more behind than comprehension.

15 In a way, as Juana implied, it would have been impossible for a leader like Zacchaeus to climb a tree unnoticed in a culture that knew no privacy.

It is clear from these comments that moving into practical action for them was rather difficult compared to comprehending a particular biblical passage or issue at hand. Further, the rest of the group commented little on the issues that touched the socio-political dimensions of salvation. Only *pastora* mentioned briefly that the poor are the most vulnerable to corrupt practices and that they should be defended. Carina stated that there is salvation for poor and the rich alike. Yet both comments remained isolated and without emphasis.

Finally, the action-consequence theology surfaced after Ruben told about the corruption of the judicial system and nearly losing his house in the process.

Ruben: This is why it is important to understand that material things do not have value. When one worries so much we come to a point when I said to him: yes Lord I give up my house and I am not going to worry anymore. If you return it or it is taken away, we lift up our arms and leave it to your hands. [Then] in one week it [the issue about the house] was resolved.

Pastora: But look, your attitude of humility, now you have a fresh start with a beautiful house.

Juanita: Yes . . .

Pastora: Beautiful swimming pool and all. Here is the reward . . .

Once again, one can see the action-consequence theology at work in *pastora*'s comments as she interprets Ruben's new house as God's reward for humility and faithfulness.

7.1.3 *Comparison of Marginalized and Privileged Reading of Luke 19:1–10*

Though the socio-economic location of each group influenced the reading somewhat, it was much less evident than during other sessions. Both groups characterized Zacchaeus as a corrupt and evil person who exploited the people. Similarly, both were amazed by the power of Jesus and the transformation that occurred in Zacchaeus' life. The change reached beyond the individual and spilled over to the whole community in the form of generosity and restitution.

As to the reading practices, each group utilized imagination and juxtaposed their present-day experience of corruption with the Zacchaeus narrative. The experiences the groups shared bore similarities, and in each case one or more group members had been victims of corruption in one way or another. In the PG's example (Ruben), however, the experience involved thousands of dollars

and years of court cases, whereas the MG's experience (e.g., pastor) was about a hundred dollars, and even this amount had been donated. Nevertheless, both groups felt powerless in the face of all-pervasive corruption that seemed to involve not only individuals but also many of the social institutions, according to groups' reports. In fact, the only antidote for the hopeless situation of corruption was considered to be spiritual transformation that then was supposed to spill out to the social and communal sphere. The MG also emphasized the importance of action-consequence theology in connection to transformation. Daniel even mentioned that Christians had drifted away from God and how it had brought negative consequences for the evangelical churches and perhaps also for the larger society. Thus, both groups' discussions functioned as a socio-political critique of corruption though the foundation for the critique was largely framed with religious convictions and language.

Some of the differences between the groups' readings were the following. The PG discovered the honor-shame dynamics in the Zacchaeus narrative, whereas the MG emphasized how corruption also had found its way into churches. The MG also emphasized slightly more the fact that Zacchaeus' corruption influenced the poor in the community. Perhaps the most significant difference between the groups was the amount that each thought that Zacchaeus gave away as restitution. As such, apart from José, the PG did not ponder the issue much. As Ruben stated, the most important factor was the change of heart and attitude. José emphasized the shrewdness of Zacchaeus in his dealings with money since he gave away half, but he still had plenty to enjoy his retirement days even after the hefty restitution. Thus, though Zacchaeus was generous, he remained rather well off. The MG on the other hand exhibited a range of opinions. *Pastora* stated that Zacchaeus gave away half of what he had, whereas Marcos said he gave away everything as he ripped the money from the walls where he had hidden it. Daniel mentioned variously "everything that he had robbed," "giving back more than was just," and giving away half plus three times¹⁶ to those he had robbed. It was somewhat difficult to deduce from these scattered comments what the exact sum was that Zacchaeus divested, according to each. The MG, however, seemed to be more interested in specifying the amount and emphasized the generosity and sacrifice of Zacchaeus, whereas José (PG) opined that Zacchaeus was left with "retirement funds" after giving away his share.

16 At another point, Daniel mentioned that Zacchaeus gave back 200 for every 50 he had robbed. It is unclear whether Daniel simply miscounted the sum here or whether he meant four-fold restitution as is indicated by the text—thus also the Spanish *Reina Valera* (Lucas 19:1–10).

Overall, there were fewer issues that pointed to the socio-economic situation as the factor in the other readings. In many respects, the groups' interpretations were remarkably similar. One reason for the similarity may have been that the narrative highlights less clearly two contrasting socio-economics groups, as was the case in the previous sections (6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:12–14; 16:19–31). The focus of the story was also on the “lost sinner” whom Jesus came to save rather than the rich and the poor, though the economic aspect was present as well.

Before exploring these ideas further, I conducted an historical reading of the same text (Luke 19:1–10) and then explored the relationship between the Bolivian ordinary readers' interpretation and my own historical reading of the passage. The purpose was not to demonstrate the superiority of the historical reading or vice versa, but rather to see similarities, differences, and possible avenues of connection/interaction between the two approaches.

7.2 Historical Readings of Luke 19:1–10

Unlike Luke 14:12–14, the story of Zacchaeus has gained considerable scholarly interest, particularly in the recent debate regarding the type of salvation that is embodied in the narrative.¹⁷ At first sight, the Zacchaeus story is a simple narrative about a short but rich toll collector who was curious to see Jesus. After climbing a sycamore tree, Jesus invites himself to be Zacchaeus' guest despite the objections of the crowd. As a response to the grumbling, Zacchaeus promises a hefty restitution and is subsequently vindicated by Jesus. Despite this relatively simple and somewhat humorous storyline, scholars have discovered a number of interpretative difficulties in the story.¹⁸

While it seems relatively clear that the narrative focuses on the perspective of Zacchaeus,¹⁹ the precise structure is more difficult to discern. Scholars have posed rather different ways of dividing it into sections. Earle Ellis sees a simple four-fold division (vv. 1–4; 5–7; 8–9; 10), while Robert O'Toole prefers a diptych model (2–5; 6–10) with four interlocking elements in each.²⁰ Kenneth Bailey, on

17 More below whether Zacchaeus experienced salvation or vindication.

18 Many of these will become apparent in the course of this section.

19 Gary Yamasaki, “Point of View in a Gospel Story: What Difference Does it Make? Luke 19:1–10 as a Test Case,” *JBL* 125:1 (2006): 98–105; Robert C. Tannehill, “The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric: Luke 19:1–10,” *Semeia* 64 (1993): 201–211.

20 E. E. Ellis, *The Century Bible* (new ed.; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 221–222; Robert F. O'Toole, “The Literary Form of Luke 19:1–10,” *JBL* 110:1 (1991): 112–115.

the other hand, divides the narrative into nine scenes and sees a “near-perfect” ring-composition with the center focusing on Jesus’ words in v. 5.²¹ O’Toole’s diptych model is probably the best alternative. He has demonstrated that Luke crafted the narrative with care and how the various elements in the narrative complement the sections. For example, the crowd functions negatively in v. 3 (Zacchaeus could not see Jesus due to the crowd) and in v. 7 (they criticize Jesus’ decision to visit Zacchaeus).²² Despite the fact that O’Toole’s structure is generally plausible, it does not take into account certain peculiarities in the narrative. Though O’Toole is correct that the narrative moves toward the words of Jesus (19:5, 9–10),²³ the focus of is not just on the words of Jesus but also the words of Zacchaeus (19:8). This becomes clear, particularly in the thrice repeated εἶπεν πρὸς (he said to; 19:5, 8, 9), of which two (19:5, 8) are followed by direct address.²⁴ In addition, both the crowd’s response (19:7)²⁵ and Jesus’ second address to Zacchaeus (also an address to the crowd; 19:9)²⁶ are framed in third person, though both statements could very well be in the second person. Similarly, O’Toole indicates that the connection (or “hooks”) between the panels are “to hurry” (σπεύσας; 19:5–6), whereas the abovementioned repetition of “he said to” (εἶπεν πρὸς) seems better candidates for this. Further, the panels are also connected with the implied need for repentance. That is, both πλούσιος (rich) and τελώνης (toll collector) throughout Luke’s narrative are in need of salvation (e.g. 5:27–32; 6:24–26; 7:34; 12:13–21; 14:12–14; 16:14; 18:18–30). This salvation is offered by Jesus and criticized by the crowd (19:7). Finally, the narrative concludes with a summary scene of Jesus as the savior (19:10). Thus, what started as Zacchaeus’ quest to see Jesus actually ended up being Jesus’ quest to save Zacchaeus.

Several scholars have also discussed the tradition and authenticity of the story. As was the case in the earlier sections, the opinions vary. Some think that the narrative is largely a Lucan creation,²⁷ while others see it as retaining an

21 Bailey, *Jesus Through Mediterranean Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2053–2063.

22 The three additional sections of the two panels include Zacchaeus’ desire to see Jesus and Jesus receiving him (2–3a; 6); Zacchaeus overcomes the crowd’s opposition (4; 8); and words of Jesus in 19:5; 19:9–10 (O’Toole, “The Literary Form,” 112–115). The links are clear even if the first (2–3a; 6) is not an exact match.

23 O’Toole, “The Literary Form,” 114.

24 19:5 vocative (Ζακχαῖε) and 19:8 interjection (ἰδοὺ).

25 Ζακχαῖε διεγόγγυζον λέγοντες ὅτι παρὰ ἀμαρταλῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰσῆλθεν καταλύσαι (19:7).

26 ὅτι σήμερον σωτερία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο (19:9).

27 Bultmann thinks that the story is an imaginary story based on Mark 2:14 as it was combined with Mark 2:15–17 and Luke’s addition of Luke 19:8, 10 (*The History of Synoptic*

authentic tradition of historical Jesus.²⁸ Many scholars think that the story, or at least a core of it, goes back to pre-Lucan tradition (L).²⁹ Some of the arguments that favor the idea that the story is Luke's creation are the following.

First, Lucan vocabulary is evident throughout the story³⁰ and Luke's favorite theological themes, such as wealth and poverty, salvation, as well as sinners/toll collectors are also present (esp. 19:2; 7–8; 9–10).³¹ Second, Bultmann pointed out that the story line does not flow smoothly. This means that either vv. 7 and 9 or v. 8 are secondary; he opts for the latter option.³² Presumably, the main reason for the inconsistency, though Bultmann does not elaborate much, is the third person address in v. 8. That is, the crowd in 19:7 is speaking to Zacchaeus, but in 19:8 Zacchaeus addresses Jesus. Further, Jesus addresses Zacchaeus in 19:9 in the third person.

As reiterated earlier, the presence of Lucan vocabulary or themes is not sufficient ground to consider a saying inauthentic, which applies to this section as well. Further, despite the arguments by Bultmann, 19:8 need not be taken as intrusive of the narrative flow. First, as indicated by the third person address, the crowd's grumbling regarding Zacchaeus is portrayed as indirect speech.³³ As such, this does not make the statement intrusive. Second, Robert Tannehill has argued persuasively that the reason for the third person address and the indirect speech is because rhetorical strategy called *insinuatio* is employed here.³⁴ This was used in situations where the audience was hostile or unresponsive. Thus, Zacchaeus (in v. 8) speaks in an indirect manner to the crowd,

Tradition, 33–34, 62); Goulder prefers to see the story's origins based on "imaginative exegesis" of Matt 9:9ff. and Mark 10:43–45 (*Luke*, 675–679).

28 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 498–534; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 257, 266–267; John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (Vol. 35c; WBC. Dallas: Word Publisher, 1993), 904; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 695.

29 E.g. Meier, *Marginal Jew*. Vol. 2, 1036; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1219–1220; Pesonen with some qualifications (Anni Pesonen, *Luke and the Sinners* [Diss. Helsinki: E-Thesis University of Helsinki, 2009], 185–190.

30 E.g. διήρχετο, ἀνὴρ, ὀνόματι, εἶπεν πρὸς, ὑπαρχόντων, πτωχοῖς σωτερία etc. (Goulder, *Luke*, 678–679).

31 One could add "joy" to this as well (19:6).

32 Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition*, 33–34, 62; Pesonen, *Luke and the Sinners*, 183–184.

33 λέγοντες ὅτι παρὰ ἁμαρταλῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰσῆλθεν καταλύσαι (19:7).

34 Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus," 207–208. Quintilian *Inst.* IV 1 42–50. Quintilian states that *insinuatio* should be used particularly when "the features of the case . . . are discreditable, or the subject is disgraceful or such as to meet with popular disapproval." (*Inst.* IV 1 42). As we will see later on Zacchaeus fits rather well into these categories due to his dishonesty and other peculiar features.

as does Jesus in v. 9 in order to avoid alienating the crowd.³⁵ Third, research in inter-cultural communication has indicated the importance of indirect speech in collectivist cultures.³⁶ This is particularly used in situations where one needs to save face or avoid shame.³⁷ From the perspective of inter-cultural communication and ancient *insinuatō*, Zacchaeus's (and Jesus') declaration is rather comprehensible. Thus, the crowd criticizes Zacchaeus (19:7; indirect speech); Zacchaeus addresses Jesus directly and the crowd indirectly indicating his restitution (19:8); Jesus addresses Zacchaeus (he said to him; εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν) and the crowd (third person address); finally, 19:10 summarizes the mission of Jesus. While this does not indicate that the story is a direct narration of the events as such, it does point out that the narrative is coherent in its present format. This also confirms that the emphasis of the narrative rhetoric is on vv. 8–10 as it stands.³⁸

While Luke's hand is evident in the redaction of the story, particularly in the choice of vocabulary and theological emphasis, it seems that the core of the narrative goes back at least to L and possibly to the historical Jesus in some form.³⁹ The most obvious Lucan redactions are 19:1 and 19:10. In 19:1, Jesus is going through (διήρχετο) Jericho when he meets with Zacchaeus, whereas the healing of the blind man occurs as Jesus draws near (ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν αὐτόν εἰς Ἱεριχὼ) to Jericho (18:35). Mark does not mention the Zacchaeus incident and instead inserts the healing of the blind man (Bartimeus) as Jesus goes out of Jericho (ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱεριχὼ; Mark 10:46). Since both incidents have to do with "seeing Jesus," it is possible that Luke has displaced the story of the blind man so that it would precede the Zacchaeus story.⁴⁰ Even if the order

35 Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus," 207–209. It is important to note that the crowd's initial comment against Zacchaeus is also indirect speech in third person (19:7) and not a direct second person address.

36 Geert Hofstede et al., *Cultures and Organizations: The Software of the Mind. Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), Kindle loc. 1700–2455; David C. Thomas and Yuan Liao, "Inter-Cultural Interactions: The Chinese Context" in *Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (ed. M. Bond; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 669–698. Honor and shame in biblical studies see e.g. Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame," 25–65; Malina, *The New Testament World*, 27–80.

37 Hofstede et al., *Cultures and Organizations*, Kindle loc. 1700–2455; Thomas and Liao, "Inter-Cultural Interactions," 669–698.

38 Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus," 207–209.

39 Nolland (*Luke 18:35–24:53*, 904) suggests that a possible minimal original could have included 19:2–6.

40 Luke uses the word ἀναβλέπω three times in the healing of the blind man (compare twice in Mark 10:51–52 and once in Matthew's version 20:34). In the Zacchaeus story, ἀναβλέπω

of events is thematized by Luke to bring out his desired theological effect, the fact that the Zacchaeus story is depicted as taking place in Jericho is plausible as such.⁴¹

The final verse (19:10) is probably a theological summary of not only the Zacchaeus narrative but also the entire travel narrative.⁴² The following parable is preceded by a transitional verse that indicates near arrival to Jerusalem (ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἱερουσαλήμ; 19:11). Though it may be a misplaced saying of Jesus,⁴³ it is probably better to see it as Luke's summary of Jesus' salvific ministry.⁴⁴ Thus, Luke probably received the core of the Zacchaeus narrative from the tradition and shaped it to fit his theological aims. Due to Luke's stylistic shaping of the episode, it is difficult to say to what extent he is responsible for the message of the story. The event contains a number of elements that fit well with Luke's specific theology as well as what many scholars would consider the aims and proclamation of historical Jesus.⁴⁵ For our purposes, suffice it to say that the story contains traditional materials that Luke shaped to fit his desired ends.

Apart from a few exceptions, the issue that scholars have discussed relatively little is Zacchaeus' status as ἀρχιτελώνης (chief toll collector).⁴⁶ It has been noted by many scholars that the word ἀρχιτελώνης (chief toll collector) is *hapax*. Since the word occurs only once in the New Testament and in the extant Greek literature,⁴⁷ it is difficult to attest the exact role of Zacchaeus in the toll collecting enterprise of first century Jericho or the way Luke's audience

is used only once but ἰδοὺ in its various forms is used three times, though in 19:8 it functions more like an interjection.

41 Cf. John O'Hanlon, "The Story of Zacchaeus and Lucan Ethic," *JSNT* 12 (1981):11–12. In a sense, had the Zacchaeus story preceded the healing of the blind man, it would have moved it closer to Jesus' meeting with the Rich Ruler (18:18–30). The audience then would have received the answer to the disciples' question καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; (18:26) earlier. John R. Donahue ("Tax collectors and sinners: An Attempt at Identification," *CBQ* 33 [1971]: 54) also states that the τελώνης were most likely stationed in commercial centers (e.g. Jericho).

42 O'Hanlon, "The Story of Zacchaeus," 11–12.

43 Thus e.g. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 698–699.

44 Fitzmyer thinks that it is part of the L tradition based on Ezek 34:6 (*The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1222). If this is the case, it was heavily reworked by Luke and placed here as a summary of Jesus' ministry to the lost sinners.

45 E.g. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 498–505, 526–534; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus y el judaismo* (trans. by J. Escobar; Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002), 255–310.

46 Schottroff and Stegemann (*Jesus and the Hope*, 6–13) are an exception; however, they pay scant attention to how the socio-historical data is to be incorporated into the story of Zacchaeus.

47 *BGAD*, 113; Michel, "τελώνης," *TDNT* 8:88–105.

would have understood it. Gillman thinks that he was a district manager and was in charge of a certain geographical area and had several subordinates.⁴⁸ Otto Michel characterizes him as “head tax-farmer” and as such subordinate to the Roman procurator and his officials.⁴⁹ John O’Hanlon mentions that he was probably a leading citizen of the town, though ἀρχιτελώνης (chief toll collector) in the narrative functions primarily to highlight Zacchaeus’ wealth and sinfulness.⁵⁰ Before attempting to identify Zacchaeus’ status and function, it is important to briefly investigate the system of taxes and tolls during the late Roman Republic and early Empire.

Donahue has demonstrated convincingly that publicans/tax collectors are not to be identified with toll collectors.⁵¹ Tax collectors collected the direct taxes, such as poll taxes and tributes, whereas toll-collectors were in charge of the indirect taxes that had to do with road tolls, duties, and alike.⁵² This distinction is important as long one keeps in mind that both groups leased rights from the Roman governors or local magistrates to perform their activities. It is also difficult to estimate to what extent Luke’s audience or other ancient hearers would have made a distinction between these groups.⁵³ Tax collectors had been a wealthy and politically influential group during the Republic. Many of them were *equites* or closely connected to them.⁵⁴ Toward the end of the Republican era, their wealth and political power increased to such an extent, particularly through their companies (*societates publicanorum*),⁵⁵ that Julius Caesar revoked the tax collecting rights from *publicani* of Asia Minor and perhaps Syria and Judea as well.⁵⁶ Despite the reduction of power of *publicani* system, tax-farming companies continued well into the Empirical era.⁵⁷

48 Gillman, *Possessions and the Life*, 89.

49 Michel, *TDNT* 8:98–99, 105.

50 O’Hanlon, “The Story of Zacchaeus,” 12.

51 Donahue, “Tax collectors and sinners,” 39–61; cf. Udoh, *To Caesar What is Caesar’s*, 239.

52 Ernst Badian, *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 11–25; Udoh, *To Caesar What is Caesar’s*, 223–241.

53 This can also be seen in the terminology. The meaning of the Latin *publicanus* and Greek τελώνης cannot simply be deduced from the terminology but rather inferred from the context. See e.g. Tacitus *Ann.* 13:50–51; Josephus *War* 2.287.

54 Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 27–66.

55 The companies refer to the organization of a number of *publicani* to join their resources. Thus, they had increasing money to buy larger farming contracts from the senate (Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 67–81).

56 Michel, *TDNT* 8:93–95; Donahue, “Tax Collectors and Sinners,” 44.

57 Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 116–118.

Tax collectors as such had a rather ill reputation (e.g. Livy, *Hist.* 45.18.4⁵⁸), though some would say they were at least sometimes just the scapegoats of the Roman oligarchy.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, though there is a certain connection between *publicani* or tax collectors and toll collectors (τελώνης) as was indicated above, it is the latter that is most pertinent to the story of Zacchaeus.⁶⁰

The toll collectors often were the practical functionaries of the toll centers (τελώνιον).⁶¹ The wealthier τελώνης (toll collectors) were able to contract rights to collect tolls in a certain geographical area,⁶² even if it is difficult to know how the system functioned in specific locales.⁶³ Overall, τελώνης (toll collectors) were officials who were in charge of collecting the indirect taxes such as duties, tolls, and harbor taxes (*portatorium*⁶⁴). Some sat by the roadside toll stations as the gospel accounts depict them (Mark 2:14; Matt 9:9; Luke 5:27), while others were wealthy (Luke 19:2; *War* 2.287) and had a better societal position (*War* 2.287). Michel notes that apart from the general distaste for paying tolls (especially to a foreign government), toll collectors were feared and disliked in antiquity. As the Roman Empire had taken over the old customs posts, the tolls were raised at the frontiers. Furthermore, the toll stations were located in such a manner as to make repetitive tolls unavoidable, especially on longer transportation routes. Since the laws concerning duties were often known only to the τελώνης (toll collectors), disputes inevitably arose among

58 "it was voted [by the Senate] . . . to discontinue the leasing of the Macedonian mines, a source of immense revenue . . . for these could not be farmed without a contractor [*sine publicano*] . . . where there was a contractor [*ubi publicanus esset*], there either the ownership by the state lapsed, or no freedom was left to the allied people."

59 Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, 114–118; On Gabinius the governor of Syria and his maltreatment of tax-collectors, see Udoh, *To Caesar What's Caesar's*, 15–30; Michel, *TDNT* 8:92–94.

60 Both the scholarly secondary literature and ancient sources do not always reflect (either in translation or original Greek) a neat distinction between tax and toll collectors. Thus, τελώνης in Greek can refer to either category.

61 There are some exceptions to this as Josephus' example indicates (*War* 2.287).

62 Donahue, "Tax Collectors and Sinners," 54–59.

63 In the Eastern part of the Empire, Rostovtzeff thinks that shortly after the ascension of Caesar, the indirect taxes were leased out and the direct taxes were under the control of the central government (M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of Roman Empire* [2nd ed., Rev. P. Fraser, Vols. 1–2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957], 48–49). During the reign of Herod the Great, the indirect taxes were farmed out (Donahue, "Tax Collectors and Sinners," 44).

64 *Portatorium* refers to all types of duties (Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 9). Matthews (J. F. Matthews, "The Tax Law of Palmyra: Evidence for Economic History in a City of the Roman East," *JRS* 74 [1984]: 172); on the other hand, he talks about *portorium* of North Africa and calls it a transit tax (or duty).

the traders and toll collectors.⁶⁵ Plutarch laments how *τελώνης* (toll collectors) not only had the legal right to inspect bags but sometimes ripped them open with little regard to the persons involved (Plutarch, *Curios.*7). The early second century tax law from Palmyra (137 CE) indicates the need for clarification of the existing toll statutes. Earlier, the duties were collected in accordance with law and general custom. This earlier practice, however, had generated so many disputes that it was necessary to erect a column next to the local temple detailing the exact duties that simultaneously superseded the old ones.⁶⁶ The local authorities were also charged with an obligation to see that no extra charges were levied. Furthermore, the law stipulated the right of toll collectors to give out mini-loans or sureties in case the customer was unable to pay the duties.⁶⁷ In case of non-payment, however, the toll collector was to be paid double the amount forfeited.⁶⁸ It seems that the rights of the toll collectors were often given preference over the traders. Also, the proneness of toll collectors to dishonesty is brought to the fore in the Palmyra text, as the local authorities were to make sure no extra duties were extracted.

Though some reflect a slightly more favorable stance, Jewish sources also depict toll-collectors in a rather negative light.⁶⁹ Particularly rabbinic literature includes several lists of despised trades on which toll collectors are connected variously to herdsmen, thieves, and tax collectors.⁷⁰ The unifying factor between these appears to be their dishonesty.⁷¹ The main reason for the dislike of toll collectors, according to rabbinic sources, thus was their dishonesty and

65 Michel, *TDNT* 8:99–100.

66 Matthews, “The Tax Law of Palmyra,” 137, 173–177. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 13.50–51) Nero erected similar inscriptions to clarify duties to curtail disputes between toll collectors and traders.

67 The text also gives an interesting glimpse to what and how much various items were taxed. For example, for four goat skins of olive oil that was transported by a camel, the toll was 13 denarii. Commerce as diverse as salted fish, slave girls, and prostitutes was subject to extraction (Matthews, “The Tax Law of Palmyra,” 173–180).

68 Matthews, “The Tax Law of Palmyra,” 178. There is some uncertainty about this interpretation since the text is somewhat obscure and parts of the text are missing.

69 Donahue notes the most important rabbinic texts as being *m. Sanh.* 3:3; *m. B. Qam.* 10:2; *m. Tehar.* 7:6 and *b. Sanh.* 25b. See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 303–312.

70 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 10–11; Donahue, “Tax Collectors and Sinners,” 51–53.

71 Donahue, “Tax Collectors and Sinners,” 51.

not merely their status as unclean or their cooperation with the Romans.⁷² Of course, it is likely that the more nationalistic Jews opposed collaboration with Romans but at least in the rabbinic literature this is not the main emphasis. Nevertheless, the picture of toll collectors in rabbinic literature is not uniformly negative. This is exemplified by the legend of Bar-Ma'jan in which the son of the tax collector is depicted as a respected member of the community (*y. Sanh.* 23c; *y. Hag.* 77d).⁷³ A few other passages in Mishnah only denounce the money of the toll collectors but not the profession per se (e.g. *m. B. Qam.* 10.1–2).⁷⁴ It is important to note that Josephus depicts John the toll collector (ὁ τελώνης; *War* 2.287, 292) in a more positive light.⁷⁵ He is connected to the “great men of the Jews” (οἱ δυνατοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων) and the “twelve principal men” (οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην δυνατοὶ δώδεκα)⁷⁶ in an account in which they fail to persuade Florus to quell the dispute in Caesarea. The gospels depict toll-collectors as disreputable persons, at least according to the Pharisaic perspective,⁷⁷ connecting them variously with sinners, gentiles, and prostitutes (*Matt* 11:19; 18:17; 21:31; *Mark* 2:14–17; *Luke* 5:30). Luke particularly lays emphasis on the dishonesty of the toll-collectors; thus, John the Baptist exhorts the repentant τελώνης (toll collector)—μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε (collect no more than the amount prescribed to you; *Luke* 3:13). Similarly, in the parable of the Pharisee and the toll-collector, the Pharisee thanks that he is not like ἄρπαγες, ἄδικοι, μοιχοί, or like ὁ τελώνης (thieves, rogues, adulterers; toll collector 18:11).

Despite all the negative comments within the sources, it is important to note that each source is written from a certain perspective. Thus, it is hardly surprising to target the wealthy elite despised toll collectors; after all, there were few professions that escaped their spiteful rhetoric. Similarly, as seen in the earlier sections regarding the way poor and poverty were portrayed, the writer's perspective needs to be evaluated critically. Thus, for example, Cicero,

72 Ibid., 51–53. Schottroff and Stegemann put a bit more emphasis on the nationalistic aspect as the Jews resisted the imperial power of the Romans (*Jesus and the Hope*, 11). Louw and Nida on other hand seem to exaggerate this (*Greek–English Lexicon*, 577).

73 *y. Sanh.* 6.23c; *y. Hag.* 2.77d. On this see esp. Jeremias (*The Parables*, 175–180, 182–187; also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 303–312).

74 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 13.

75 Though these men offer Florus eight talents of gold (undoubtedly as a bribe), he leaves the Jews to fight off the battle on their own.

76 It seems also that John is depicted as in some way the leader of the twelve men here.

77 From the perspective of gospel writers, the toll-collectors are sinners who are in need of salvation and repentance, but they are also depicted as responsive to the kingdom message of Jesus.

though sometimes called the “champion” of the tax collectors,⁷⁸ criticizes them at times for dishonesty and being involved in acts of injustice (*Verr.* 3.13.32; 3.20.50–51; cf. 2.3.7; 2.3.41). Others are critical of tax farmers due to the fact that they are suspected of dishonesty (Livy, *Hist.* 45.18.3–5; cf. *m. Sanh.* 3:3) or otherwise held suspect on ethical grounds (Lucian *Men.* 11; Dio Crysostom, *Orat.* 14.14).⁷⁹ Schottroff and Stegemann are probably on the right track when they state that “jurists and moralists condemned tax collectors *only* when they did wrong; tradesmen [*sic*] always attacked them . . . people of rank despised them.”⁸⁰ Thus, it seems safe to conclude that many, though not all, considered toll collectors to be morally suspect and at least bent on dishonesty. The elite generally considered anyone below their pedigree with a greater or lesser degree of contempt.

Regarding Luke’s gospel, it seems that the main weight falls on the moral suspicion of toll collectors and their dishonesty in dealing with possessions (3:13; 5:31; 7:34; 18:9–14; 19:1–10). As Joel Green has pointed out, the initial characterization of Zacchaeus is rather ambiguous—he is wealthy and a toll collector.⁸¹ The first categorization (πλούσιος; rich) places him into a rather suspicious light in Luke while the toll collectors are generally accepting of Jesus in the gospel. Though the text does not explicitly state that he became wealthy due to his toll collecting enterprise, this seems to be the likely intent.⁸² Luke may have used the word ἀρχιτελώνης (chief toll collector) to indicate that he was merely important among the toll collectors.⁸³ Gilman’s suggestion, however, that Zacchaeus was a sort of district manager who perhaps had several subordinates seems more plausible.⁸⁴ Yet, it is unlikely that he would have come from the upper echelon of society like John the tax collector (*War* 2.287, 292), or that Luke’s audience would have perceived him as such. Had that been the case, the crowd would not have blocked him off or criticized him as openly as the narrative portrays.⁸⁵ There is one clue within the narrative, however, that

78 Udoh, *To Caesar What is Caesar’s*, 54–55.

79 Lucian (*Men.* 11) lumps toll collectors together with adulterers, procurers, toadies, and informers and “all that crowd of people who create such confusion in life” [τοιοῦτος ὅμιλος τῶν πάντα κυκλώντων ἐν τῷ βίῳ].

80 Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 13.

81 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 667–669.

82 See especially the way Luke juxtaposes ἀρχιτελώνης and πλούσιος as well as the emphatic αὐτός in 19:2.

83 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* 2:36 (§57.185).

84 Gilman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith*, 89.

85 Bailey points out the customary honor that would have been given to a person of high status in the Middle Eastern culture (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2075).

may indicate that he was seen as a particularly despicable individual. In his important article on ancient physiognomics, Mikeal Parsons has pointed out that Zacchaeus' small stature would have probably indicated his small-mindedness and greediness. Congenital smallness was also perceived as a result of past sins.⁸⁶ Therefore, his status remains rather ambiguous, though it is likely that Luke's audience would have identified toll collectors as disreputable and Zacchaeus as particularly suspect due to his wealth (and small stature). From a macro-sociological perspective, he probably could be placed on the retainer class due to his relative wealth and service to the elite.⁸⁷ His status as a chief toll collector in society, however, especially from the Jewish perspective, would have been viewed as rather dishonorable. After all, he would have been morally suspect, and worse, seen as an exploiter of his own people, even if this cannot be made into a blanket statement as rabbinic literature indicates. In addition, he would have had more contacts with ordinary people than did the elites and thus would have been a more likely object of their hatred.

The question of Zacchaeus' salvation is a vexing issue that has occupied scholars for some decades. Before the issue can be investigated in more detail, two related questions need to be answered. The first concerns the type of Zacchaeus's restitution; the second about the communal effects of his transformation.

Scholars have been long puzzled about the exact nature of Zacchaeus's restitution. After all, he seems to get off easier than the Rich Ruler (18:18–23) or the disciples (5:1–11; 12:32–34; 14:33).⁸⁸ While the Rich Ruler was commanded πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς (sell all that you have and give to the poor), Zacchaeus announced τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων . . . τοῖς πτωχοῖς διδῶμι (half of my possessions . . . I give to the poor), which was in addition to the four-fold restitution to those he had defrauded.⁸⁹ There is a marked difference between the statements. The command to the Rich Ruler is rather unambiguous—give everything to the poor—but Zacchaeus's statement has elicited various interpretations. The clause τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων (half of my possessions) may mean that he gave away half of all of his possessions, as the

86 Mikeal Parsons, "Short in Stature: Luke's Physical Description of Zacchaeus," *NTS* 47 (2001): 50–57. Parsons highlights references in both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.

87 On the comparative and theoretical stratification model of advanced agrarian societies, see Lenski *Power and Privilege*, 210–282 (for retainers, see esp. 244–248); for application to the Roman Empire and Luke's text, see Autero, "Social Status in Luke's Birth Narrative," 36–45.

88 Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus," 203; Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption*, 175–176.

89 εἴ τινας τι ἐσυκοφάντησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν (19:8).

majority of scholars think.⁹⁰ Alternatively, it can refer to giving away the half that remained after the four-fold restitution.⁹¹ Thus, as Tannehill states, “nothing is said about . . . [Zacchaeus] trying to strike a bargain, offering less than Jesus demanded.”⁹² Therefore, according to this view, Zacchaeus then divests everything, but the former view seems more convincing, that Zacchaeus gave away half of his possessions and made a four-fold restitution from the remaining assets. As Thomas Phillips has mentioned, Luke could have simply stated that Zacchaeus gave away everything and there would have been no ambiguity in the matter.⁹³ Nevertheless, it seems futile to try to calculate the exact “balance sheet” of Zacchaeus’s restitution or what remained after the fact.⁹⁴ He clearly moved beyond the customary Jewish idea of restitution as he gave away half of his possessions, even if the four-fold restitution finds counterparts in the Jewish tradition and later Roman law (Lev 6:5; Num 5:6–7; Exod 22:1; 2 Sam 12:6; *Dig.* 39.4).⁹⁵ Even without the four-fold restitution, giving away half

90 Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 170–173; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1222; Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 133. Bailey seems to think that the whole speech about restitution is a rhetorical exaggeration in a typical Middle-Eastern fashion that the audience would have understood as a pledge to “clean up his financial act with the community” (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2110–2150).

91 Tannehill, “The Story of Zacchaeus,” 203; Metzger (*Wealth and Consumption*, 175–176) argues this on grammatical grounds saying that μου modifies ἡμισιά and thus refers to *his* half, i.e., the half that is left. Though the interpretation is grammatically possible, I do not find it convincing. It strikes as odd to start a sentence of restitution by saying that one gives away his or her own half away without further explanation of the other half—is Zacchaeus giving away somebody else’s half subsequently? On the grammatical construction that renders Metzger’s suggestion rather implausible, see Culy, et al., *Luke*, 590.

92 Tannehill, “The Story of Zacchaeus,” 203.

93 Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 172–173.

94 Bailey has calculated that if all of the money he has ever collected unjustly from the community amounts to 13% of his remaining assets, he cannot fulfill his pledge (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2133).

95 Prov 6:31 indicates that a thief who is caught stealing needs to repay seven-fold (ἐπταπλάσια). The statement is probably non-literal since it parallels “forfeit all the goods of their house.” 2 Sam 12:6 also insists on a four-fold restitution (though LXX has ἐπταπλάσιονα). Josephus states that four-fold (τετραπλῶ) restitution was the norm for stealing (*Ant.* 16.1.3). It is possible that Josephus generalizes the command of Exod 22:1 here. Schottroff and Stegemann (*Jesus and the Hope*, 8–11) suggest that Zacchaeus’s restitution accords with the Roman law according to *Dig.* 39.4. This is an attractive solution but *Corpus iuris civilis* that the statute is part of dates to the sixth century and therefore it is doubtful whether the same law was in place during the first century, as Schottroff and Stegemann indicate.

of one's possessions is certainly a large sum and would have brought financial difficulties to Zacchaeus. The fact that he seemingly was allowed to get off "easier" is probably due to two factors. First, his response was voluntary and self-initiated, as a response to Jesus' gracious invitation.⁹⁶ Second, the argument seems to presuppose that Luke's Jesus always required complete renunciation of everything, like in the case of the Rich Ruler (18:18–23; cf. 12:32–34; 14:33).⁹⁷ As many scholars have pointed out, however, Luke does not present a consistent view or a simple formula about how much one should give to the poor (e.g., 7:1–10; 8:1–3; 18:18–23; 19:10; 22:35–38).⁹⁸ Finally, it may very well be that Luke wanted to leave Zacchaeus's exact restitution deliberately vague, since he does not advocate a one-size-fits-all formula for dealing with possessions. With Zacchaeus, however, Luke does indicate that being in the presence of Jesus included a radical element of sacrifice and divestiture that was directed toward the poor and the ones he defrauded.

In the midst of scholarly opinion about Zacchaeus's restitution, few have discussed the communal aspect of his salvation. When the issue does come up, it usually has to do with his restoration to the Jewish people as a son of Abraham (19:9).⁹⁹ It is true that Jesus' words to Zacchaeus, together with his promise of restitution, open the way for him to be part of God's people. Beyond this, however, it seems that his restitution would have had a great impact on the community. While it is impossible to know the amount of money he originally had, as a wealthy person it is safe to assume the economic impact of distribution and restitution would have been considerable, even if this is imagined only at the narrative level. It is perhaps futile to speculate whether Zacchaeus could have continued in his old profession (cf. 3:12–14). Nevertheless, with the potential community accountability and need to honor one's public declaration,

96 Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 170. Compare this with the command to the Rich Ruler to sell everything (18:18–23).

97 This seems to be the tendency of Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption*; Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978).

98 E.g. Johnson's often quoted sentence "Luke consistently speaks about possessions . . . [but] does not speak about possessions consistently" (Luke T. Johnson, *Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* [SBL Diss. Series. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1977], 13); more recently, Raj Nadella, *Dialogue Not Dogma: Many Voices in the Gospel of Luke* (Library of New Testament Studies. London: T&T Clark, 2011), 101–110.

99 Bailey is one of the few scholars who discuss community transformation to some extent (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2136–2146). Similarly, Tannehill, though he discusses this much more briefly with the focus of Zacchaeus as a "reinstated Jew" ("The Story of Zacchaeus," 206). Metzger opines that Zacchaeus' full divestiture alienates him even further from the community (*Wealth and Consumption*, 178–180).

his changed lifestyle would have had an impact beyond the initial restitution. This would have become apparent in the improved social relations within the community among other things. Even if one would consider the story as fictive or partially so, it is not far-fetched to think that Luke's audience could have pictured a similar scene in Jericho. Similar sentiments are echoed in the readings of both Bolivian groups' readings, and the issue will be revisited in the next section.

Finally, the main bone of contention among scholars has been whether Zacchaeus's salvation (σωτηρία) ought to be considered vindication of his customary practice or conversion from a status of sinner to a son of Abraham. One of the main arguments revolves around the exact meaning of τὰ ἡμίσιά μου . . . τοῖς πτωχοῖς δίδωμι (I give half of my . . . to the poor) and the following τι ἔσυκοφάντησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν (what I have defrauded I return four-fold). That is, should the present tense forms of δίδωμι/ἀποδίδωμι (give/return) be understood as customary (or iterative) or futuristic present? The more specific issue is whether Zacchaeus is merely reiterating (and thus defending) his customary practice of giving away part of his possessions (customary/iterative sense), or whether he is making a pledge to the community to do so in the near future (futuristic sense).¹⁰⁰ Scholarly opinions are rather equally divided.¹⁰¹ Since many scholars have rehearsed the arguments rather exhaustively, I present only what I would consider the most decisive arguments from both sides.

The most convincing arguments in support of the vindication of Zacchaeus are the following: First, the present tense of the main verbs (δίδωμι/ἀποδίδωμι; give/return) seems to indicate customary action rather than a future event.¹⁰² Second, there seems to be no explicit references to Zacchaeus's contrition

100 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1220–1222; Dennis Hamm, "Luke 19:8 Once Again: Does Zacchaeus Defend or Resolve?" *JBL* 107 (1988): 431–437.

101 For scholars who prefer to see Zacchaeus's salvation as vindication, see Alan C. Mitchell, "Zacchaeus Revisited: Luke 19:8 as a Defence," *Biblica* 71 (1990): 153–176; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1220–1227; Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty*, 170–172; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 671–673; Richard C. White, "A Good Word for Zacchaeus? Exegetical Comment on Luke 19:1–10," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 10 (1979): 89–96. Those who support the conversion model, see Dennis Hamm, "Zacchaeus Revisited Once More: A Story of Vindication or Conversion?" *Biblica* 72 (1991): 249–252; Hamm, "Luke 19:8 Once Again," 431–437; Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2066–2175; Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption*; Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 433–436; Pesonen, *Luke and the Sinners*, 183–190; Nave, *The Role and Function*, 184.

102 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1220–1221.

or repentance.¹⁰³ Neither of these arguments is conclusive. Despite Richard White's suggestion that the futuristic meaning of δίδωμι (give) is "torturous translation," many scholars throughout the centuries have supported it.¹⁰⁴ As such, the futuristic sense of the present tense is legitimate, as even Fitzmyer seems to admit.¹⁰⁵ Other arguments, however, militate against the vindication view and ultimately make it rather unlikely. First, if Zacchaeus had been routinely giving away half of his possessions, he would have been impoverished in no time with nothing left to give.¹⁰⁶ Further, as Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida have pointed out, the verb συκοφαντέω (defraud) implies a deliberate fraud.¹⁰⁷ Thus, it is unlikely that Zacchaeus would be claiming to customarily make a four-fold restitution of the money he had deliberately defrauded.¹⁰⁸ Second, it is rather difficult to understand his lost state if he was doing the right thing all along.¹⁰⁹ As far as his lack of explicit repentance, it needs to be seen as implicit rather than non-existent. The text has a number of indicators that point to Zacchaeus's repentance in addition to the restitution that he

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- 103 "We do not find Zacchaeus presented as contrite, humiliated, acknowledging his sins"; "whether he confessed his sins is . . . central question" (Richard C. White, "A Good Word for Zacchaeus? Exegetical Comment on Luke 19:1–10," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 10 (1979): 90, 91).
- 104 White, "A Good Word for Zacchaeus?" 94. See especially Plummer's list of interpreters from the patristic era to the modern times (*A Critical and Exegetical*, 435); Hamm, "Luke 19:8 Once Again," 431–437. Hamm is probably right when he states that the grammar of the verse is open to more than one interpretation and therefore the conclusion should be drawn from the storyline rather than vice versa (p. 437).
- 105 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1225; For various possibilities of translating the present tense, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*, 513–539, esp. 535–537; *BDF* also states that "[i]n confident assertions regarding the future, a vivid, realistic present may be used for the future" (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Trans. and ed. R. W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §323).
- 106 Hamm, "Luke 19:8 Once Again," 431–437. It is important to note that Luke uses the word ὑπαρχόντων which does not refer to income but possessions (p. 434). Further, one cannot ignore the fact that Zacchaeus is considered rich (πλούσιος) in the narrative.
- 107 Louw and Nida, 2:231; Culy et al., *Luke*, 591.
- 108 Culy et al. (*Luke*, 590) also indicate that this is a first class conditional sentence. Thus, the implication is that Zacchaeus did defraud people and was aware of it. The reason why it is framed as a conditional sentence is probably to make an implied concession, rather than an open acknowledgment, to save face. One wonders if Zacchaeus had made an explicit and open confession, he would have risked the wrath of the crowd.
- 109 It is also nearly impossible that the community would not be aware of this customary restitution, since privacy was nearly unheard of.

makes. He received Jesus with joy to his house. Particularly, joy is associated with salvation, being lost, and repentance and its effects in Luke.¹¹⁰ Zacchaeus is referred to as sinner or ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀνὴρ (19:7); salvation (σωτερία) comes to him and his house (19:8); he was lost (ἀπολωλός) and is now found (19:10).¹¹¹ It is rather difficult to maintain that a sinner who was lost and is now saved refers to someone who is doing the right thing all along and merely needs to be vindicated of his actions. Thus, it is safe to conclude that in this story, Jesus is depicted as a savior who came to seek and save the rich and corrupt Zacchaeus whom the townspeople would have seen as a robber and of dubious character. After meeting with Jesus and a promise of generous restitutions, however, he is pronounced a son of Abraham and part of the covenant people of God.

Finally, as depicted in the narrative, Zacchaeus undoubtedly would have functioned as an exemplary rich person whose life was transformed by the presence of Jesus. He was a model of a rich and corrupt individual who demonstrated his repentance by distributing a large percentage of his possessions to the poor and the needy in the community. As such, his conversion would have been paradigmatic and challenging, particularly those in Luke's audience who would have fallen into the PS3–4 category, though it is possible that others could have identified with the dimension of Zacchaeus as a corrupt sinner as well.

7.3 Toward a Critical Dialogue—Reading Luke 19:1–10 across Contexts

Both Bolivian groups saw Zacchaeus as a rich and corrupt man whose life changed radically when he met Jesus. Though the groups occasionally referred to historical background information regarding toll collectors, the main interpretative framework was their own religious and socio-political context. Thus, Zacchaeus was variously likened to a corrupt immigration official, prison guard, or more generally to societal corruption, which included wealth and power due to his position. This present-day reading complements the historical investigation that highlighted the perceptions of toll collectors in the ancient world and how Luke's audience might have perceived Zacchaeus's role in the story.

José (PG) portrayed vividly the experience of extortion that he had seen and experienced in Bolivia, and based on widespread corruption in the ancient

110 See e.g. 15:5; 15:24, 32.

111 These echo Jesus' initial call of Levi and his call to sinners to repent (5:32). See further Nave, *The Role and Function*, 184.

world,¹¹² it is likely that similar dynamics were known to Luke's audience and could have played a part in the Zacchaeus story. Further, Marcos's (MG) comment that people would have wanted to kill Zacchaeus due to his exploitative practice and corruption is also credible in Luke's historical situation, even if it had only remained a fleeting desire without concrete manifestation. One imagines this desire might have been augmented by Zacchaeus's small stature (and looks?) and his notorious character. In light of this, Zacchaeus's indirect language as admission of guilt and repentance in the story becomes more comprehensible.

An illuminating example of creativity of the Bolivian groups' reading is found in the way Zacchaeus's small stature was interpreted. Before Parsons's article on ancient physiognomics,¹¹³ the significance of Zacchaeus's stature in the narrative has basically been ignored; thereafter, some scholars refer to it briefly.¹¹⁴ Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, both Bolivian groups highlighted the detail and the PG spent considerable time expounding it. Pastor and Daniel (MG) characterized Zacchaeus as a midget with a deformed hunchback. These physical characteristics contributed to his social marginalization despite his wealth.¹¹⁵ José (PG), on the other hand, gave a detailed analysis of Zacchaeus's stature and how it was connected to his character. According to him, "the short ones unfortunately tend to be more perverse than the rest" and the reason for the perversity is because "short people are teased more than the rest."¹¹⁶ He further stated that due to these experiences, Zacchaeus would have been particularly corrupt and vengeful. It is interesting to note the insightful comments of both groups, each of which made a connection between the physical

112 Corruption is portrayed often and vividly in the ancient sources. For some representative examples, see e.g. *War* 2.282–296; *Acts* 24:26; *Livy, Hist* 45.18.4; *Cicero Verr.* 3.13.32; 3.20.50–51.

113 Parsons, "Short in Stature," 51–57.

114 E.g. Metzger, *Wealth and Consumption*, 172; Pesonen, *Luke and the Sinners*, 188. Thompson makes a brief and rather vague connection between Zacchaeus's stature and the way other people viewed him as a sinner. He seems to equate his stature as a metaphor of "people looking down on him." He seems to have no knowledge of Parsons's article (Bud V. Thomson, "Preaching the Justification of Zacchaeus," *Lutheran Quarterly* XXIII (2009): 469–470).

115 Pastor mentioned that he received the clue to his interpretation from "a secular book." It is impossible to know which book he refers to but perhaps highlights the connection to the popular culture as interpretative medium.

116 Some group members were somewhat critical of this characterization and particularly connecting small stature with character deficiency.

description of Zacchaeus, his moral character, and the social implications.¹¹⁷ One wonders how many academic biblical scholars would think of such creative interpretations, whether or not one were skeptical of some details in a strictly historically oriented scholarship. Further, if Parsons had not published his article, one may only wonder how Western biblical scholars would have reacted to the reading of the Bolivian groups.

As mentioned earlier, the Bolivian groups were most impressed by the transformation of Zacchaeus. Evidently, nobody doubted whether the story was true, if it ever happened, or if it did, how the transformation exactly occurred. As is well known, issues of history and historicity have been on the top of the agenda of Western biblical scholars, though the salvation/vindication has been the most vigorously debated topic of recent decades with respect to Zacchaeus's story. Both Bolivian groups focused on making sense of his salvation, and while both believed strongly in the transforming power of God and Jesus (or the Holy Spirit), the MG group made some particularly critical comments. For example, Daniel said that Zacchaeus gave back more than was just and that it was quite unbelievable, even if he finally accepted the truthfulness of the account. José wondered how the corrupt (and formerly [and now] bullied) little man was able to forfeit and let go of his vengeance and corrupt practices. At the same time, he admired the astuteness of Zacchaeus as he kept part of his possessions for himself when he retired from the toll collecting business.¹¹⁸ Finally, both groups were impressed by Zacchaeus's inner desire to see Jesus despite his marginalization, shameful feat of climbing a tree, and people's ridicule.

Both Bolivian groups also highlighted the communal effects of Zacchaeus's salvation. In addition to distributing a large part of his wealth to the poor, the event brought great joy and lifted up the morale of the people. Thus, Jesus demonstrated his love to the whole community through salvation and radical transformation of one marginalized individual. Daniel's comment reflects these sentiments.

117 One might presume that Zacchaeus's person was deliberately derided in order to demonstrate the magnificence of salvation that Jesus brought. While an element of this kind may be perhaps detected, it seems that particularly the connection between physical descriptions and corruption does not necessitate this. Overall, I did not detect that either group would have particularly tried to vilify Zacchaeus to make his conversion overly dramatic.

118 This kind of "practical wisdom" or "calculating" was dismissed by Tannehill ("The Story of Zacchaeus," 203) and Metzger (*Wealth and Consumption*, 173–178). The MG group opined that Zacchaeus divested a large percentage, if not all of his possessions, to help the poor in the community.

[F]or these depreciated people that have no value that nobody in the society would accept . . . He [Jesus] preached with his life . . . he lifted the morale of the people very high and above all he exalted his love to people.

Based on the above examples, one can hardly miss the difference between the historical scholarly readings and that of the Bolivian groups. Historical scholarship focuses generally on historical questions and favors a detached and analytical stance, while both Bolivian groups freely connected their reading to their life situation and circumstances.

As in the previous sections (particularly Luke 14:12–14 and 16:19–31), the use of imagination seems to be one of the key entry points into the text. Imagination allowed both groups to juxtapose (and freely mix) the interpretative horizons and thus bring it close to their lived experience.¹¹⁹ As the above examples have demonstrated, the use of imagination came across several times.

Another interesting point of contact between the historical reading and the Bolivian readers was the perceived honor-shame dynamics of the story. Many scholars have noted in passing how odd it must have been for Zacchaeus to have climbed a tree. Some also have pointed out that it would have been considered rather dishonorable for a wealthy man to do so.¹²⁰ Bailey is probably the only scholar who has actually paid close attention to Zacchaeus's tree climbing endeavor and illustrated the sheer madness of the feat with stories from the Middle East.¹²¹ While the MG did not comment on Zacchaeus's tree climbing experience, members of the PG were actually quite interested in it. Climbing a tree was not only considered shameful but close to utter madness for a wealthy and powerful man like Zacchaeus. Ruben mentioned that people would have laughed at the "super elegant man" who wore brand name clothes and was caught sitting in a tree. Pastor (PG) stated humorously that he would have climbed a tree "for a ten thousand dollar reward." *Pastora* (PG)

119 This is not to deny that historical scholarship does not or should not use imagination in the interpretation. In fact, it seems that it is used more than is generally acknowledged, though its use is more disciplined and subordinate to logic and analytical reasoning.

120 E.g. Tannehill states briefly that [Zacchaeus] "climbs into a tree . . . [which is] undignified for an adult to do" ("The Story of Zacchaeus," 203).

121 Bailey, *Jesus Through the Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kindle loc. 2079–2101 relates a following story to illustrate the how incredible (and shameful) it must have been for a wealthy man like Zacchaeus to have climbed a tree. John Badeau, an American ambassador in Cairo, Egypt once climbed a tree in the privacy of his walled mansion to fix lights for the embassy party. This incident somehow reached the current president Nasser who subsequently had to verify the truthfulness of this incredible story face to face (and before an audience) from John Badeau.

likened Zacchaeus's tree climbing and subsequent discovery to "[i]t's like saying . . . look, Juan is walking naked and Zacchaeus is midget in size," thus highlighting the ridiculous nature of the feat. The honor-shame dynamics of the story were seen as much more important and integral to the story than most Western biblical scholars have assumed. Therefore, based on Bailey's illustrations of the present-day Middle-Eastern cultural dynamics and the Bolivian groups' exposition of the text, it actually seems rather likely that the honor-shame dimension was much more integral to the original story than most modern biblical scholars have realized.

Finally, in their interpretation, the Bolivian groups moved from textual data, to Zacchaeus's corruption, to corruption in their own experience.¹²² As a practical conclusion, both referred to action-consequence theology as an explanatory factor in corruption. The hermeneutical connection¹²³ could be characterized as follows:

Zacchaeus story → corruption in the story → corruption in Bolivia →
remedy [and cause] for corruption presently [i.e., action-consequence
theology and salvation]

Thus, both groups concluded that one of the [only] modes of improving the life situation of individuals and community [and society] is to live according to God's will.¹²⁴ Faithful living not only brings positive [or negative] consequences to individuals and communities, but it actually functions as a motivating factor (e.g., Daniel) to act justly and uprightly in the midst of the corrupt society. In addition, both groups, to a greater or lesser degree, connected their understanding of action-consequence theology to God's justice, which is meted out already in this life.

It is rather difficult to evaluate whether there is any connection between the historical reading of Zacchaeus's story and the action-consequence theology of the Bolivian groups. One possible direction is to lay emphasis on Zacchaeus's

122 The logical connection is not so neat and tidy but the idea of back and forth movement between these spheres is visible.

123 Of course, on a broader hermeneutical level, the interpretation of the Zacchaeus story was conducted within and in light of the groups' socio-religious contexts.

124 It is notable here that even the PG felt powerless. Though both groups felt powerless, Ruben's example of having the resources to pay thousands of dollars to settle the corrupt lawyers and thus avoiding losing their house (or going to jail) shows the a great difference between the groups.

active seeking of Jesus (19:3).¹²⁵ As a result of this, Jesus met with him and his life was transformed. There are certainly parts in Luke's gospel that point in this direction; that is, seeking will result in finding (e.g. 11:9–13). The dynamics within the narrative, however, are rather complex to determine a simple theological connection—whether on the part of Zacchaeus or Jesus.¹²⁶ Whatever merits this approach might have, the Bolivian groups connected action-consequence theology more emphatically to concrete circumstances of life. Perhaps the larger question would be, especially in the historical reading, to what extent the Deuteronomistic theology of retribution would have framed the understanding of Luke's audience.

Based on the above dialogue between the ordinary Bolivian readers' interpretation and historical reading, it may be concluded that it was possible to find not only points of contact but mutually illuminating aspects as well. In the reading of the story of Zacchaeus, the most significant factors seem to have been certain cultural factors (honor-shame dynamics and reading of Zacchaeus's stature). While socio-economic factors were not insignificant, perhaps they were less so than in the previous passages.

125 Daniel (MG) actually pointed out that Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus.

126 See e.g. Thompson, who flattens the dynamics of the story unduly by over-emphasizing the doctrine of "justification by faith" in the story ("Preaching the Justification of Zacchaeus," 465–479).

PART 3

Findings, Conclusions, and Implications



Hermeneutics, Socio-Economic Status, and Luke's Gospel

The objective of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the analysis of the empirical and historical readings that were conducted earlier (chapters 3–7). The chapter will focus on the hermeneutical processes of the Bolivian groups, the influence of socio-economic status on the interpretative processes, and the contribution of the case study to the scholarly readings of Luke's gospel. The first section delineates the manner with which the Bolivian groups interpreted and used the various Lucan texts about wealth, poverty, and salvation; the second examines to what extent the groups' socio-economic status influenced their reading of the biblical texts; and the third section evaluates whether empirical hermeneutics in general and the case study of the Bolivian Pentecostal groups in particular may make a contribution to biblical scholarship.

8.1 General Hermeneutical Processes of the Bolivian Groups

As highlighted earlier in chapter 2, the hermeneutical processes and the use of biblical texts by the two Bolivian Pentecostal groups proved to be interesting and revealing. The way they read, heard, and applied the texts also had socio-political implications. This section attempts to shed light into the way the two groups interpreted and utilized the biblical texts about wealth, poverty, and salvation in the case study. The relevant theoretical insights that were highlighted earlier will also be used as a framework in this analysis.¹

¹ The following dimensions of the hermeneutical processes are explored, though some sections have been combined in the actual analysis: 1) Attention to the text itself (i.e., the literary level), 2) Attention to the world behind the text (historical background), 3) Attention to the tradition of interpretation, 4) Interpretational strategies (linking text to the contemporary experience, bridging the gap between text and experience, influence of the Bible on them), 5) Strategies of imagination, 6) Character identification, 7) Appropriation strategies, 8) Praxeological effect (i.e., creation of new action), 9) Codes or heuristic keys (i.e., what unlocked the meaning of the text), 10) Reading attitude (e.g., dogmatic, pietistic, emancipatory), 11) Attention to the contemporary context of interpretation (awareness of one's own context and its influence on reading), 12) Attention to the world behind the interpretation process (ideologies and/or power relations that may influence, guide, or distort their

8.1.1 *The Bolivian Groups' Attention to the Text Itself*

Attention to the text itself refers to the extent that the groups paid attention to the literary forms, structure, and grammar of the text. There is no doubt that both groups read through the passages carefully and tried to make sense of them, at first on their own during the spontaneous reading phase, and subsequently with the help of the questions provided by the CBS process.

As noted in earlier chapters, neither group paid conscious attention to the various literary genres (e.g., *makarisms*, parable) or the literary structure of the texts. This does not mean, however, that the groups would have ignored the narrative or its literary dynamics. As indicated, for example, Daniel used the lesser to greater argument in his analysis of Luke 12:22–34, and many others pointed out the dualistic pattern in the beatitudes and woes (6:20–26). The prophetic element was also inferred from the text by some (esp. MG) as they criticized the inequalities within the church and the society. Nevertheless, the insights into the literary structures were generally rudimentary and sporadic and reflected intuitive rather than systematic exploration of the texts' literary features. Similarly, the passages that were read in the group were not seen as part of a larger literary work of Luke's gospel (or Luke–Acts); rather, they were viewed as part of a larger network of interrelated texts within the larger biblical canon.

The text did not seem to be an end in itself and thus was rarely analyzed in a minutiae fashion, as is the tendency of biblical scholars. It is perhaps interesting to note that there were two individuals who stood out regarding the textual analysis, both of whom belonged to the PG. José (PG) paid relatively close attention to the text in comparison to other participants, whereas the pastor (PG) seemed to pay proportionately little. At times, the pastor seemed to completely ignore the text or propose a meaning that appeared to be nearly the opposite of its basic idea (e.g., 16:19–31), probably because it militated against his prosperity-oriented theology.

Overall, it seems the passages that were in a story format (Luke 16:19–31; 19:1–10) were explored more carefully, as both the broader storyline and its various parts often received a rather detailed analysis. It is possible that the narrative framework made the text easier to understand and enabled discussion both on the whole and the details. On the other hand, the exploration of the texts in sayings format (6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:12–14) tended to focus more on few main features of the text. While it is impossible to give equal attention to every part of the text, at times this led to ignoring certain parts (e.g., the

reading), and 13) Attention to group dynamics. These are adapted from de Wit, "Codes and Coding," 408–411; Conradie and Jonker, "Bible Study," 381–398.

PG's lack of comment on 12:32–33). Occasionally, significant portions of the text faded completely to the background as the group explored present-day appropriation of a word or concept that had been lifted out of the narrative framework.

8.1.2 *Attention to the World behind the Text*

The world behind the text includes two aspects: First, it refers to the processes that brought about the final form of the text. In the case of Luke's gospel, this means the underlying oral and written traditions and their relation to the final form of the text. Second, it refers to the extra-textual historical and cultural information that may be gathered from other ancient sources, which helps biblical scholars to reconstruct the original situation and meaning of the text.

The Bolivian groups' attention to the first aspect was non-existent and marginal to the second. Generally, there seemed to be little need to explore the text as an alien or historically distant document. At times, a group member referred to an isolated textual feature as "in those days" or "in biblical times people used to—" to make a distinction to the group's present-day experience. These comments, however, generally referred to a single word or phrase rather than a narrative or biblical book as a whole. Thus, it seems that available historical information was brought to play only when it was needed to furnish an explanation to an otherwise inexplicable feature in the text.² This also applied to the historical information that I offered during the CBS process. The background information remained as a detached feature that often found little connection with the groups' actual reading processes. Nevertheless, on a few occasions, José (PG) utilized his own knowledge of biblical social history to highlight the historical context of oppression and poverty during the time of Jesus (esp. 6:20–26). At other times, the historical role and character of the Pharisees were explored, though they were often viewed in a rather stereotypical way (e.g., MG 14:12–14).

It is difficult to state with certainty what the reasons for the lack of interest in the historical aspects of the text might have been. Some of these may have been the lack of suitable material and inability to incorporate such material

2 Though the historical background information that the Bolivian groups furnished to explain otherwise unintelligible features in the text was at times questionable in light of present-day biblical scholarship, at times I was struck by the amount of information both groups brought forward. This is all the more surprising since nobody in either group claimed to have gone through seminary education. Most likely, the information was obtained from sermons, popular Bible teachers, and occasional Bible school classes and short seminars that abound among the Bolivian Pentecostal churches.

into the relevance-seeking reading of the Pentecostal groups—the hermeneutical tradition of which undoubtedly played a role as well.³ After all, as discussed in chapter one, according to many Pentecostals, the experience of the Spirit enables the believer to gain direct access to the meaning of biblical texts. Thus, historical information or seeing the text as an object of analysis is not deemed relevant. Nevertheless, when the Bolivian readers possessed the information themselves and I did not give it during the CBS process, they profitably exploited it to make sense of the text. Thus, it seems that at least some group members felt that the historical material they possessed occasionally functioned as an aid in the reading process, even if it did not determine the meaning of the passage as such.

8.1.3 *Interpretational Strategies, Including Strategies of Imagination and Character Identification*

The ways the readers linked their present-day experiences with the text and its various aspects are called interpretational strategies. Closely related to this are strategies of imagination and character identification. These purport to evaluate how the groups used imagination and what characters they identified within the biblical texts.

As mentioned in the previous section, the historical context or situation of the text played little importance in the groups' readings. Quite the contrary, the texts were often recontextualized and read in light of the groups' present-day experience and circumstances. This was the case particularly with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) and the story of Zacchaeus (19:1–10).

Both groups felt no need to ponder the ancient ideas about afterlife or the Roman system of taxation or toll collecting. Rather, the present-day socio-cultural context helped make sense of the texts. Thus, Zacchaeus was likened to a corrupt immigration official and local politician. Likewise, describing the conditions of misery in the MG group's immediate surroundings highlighted

3 It is perhaps noteworthy that though the printed materials, such as commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and so on, are readily available in Spanish, they were scarce and extremely expensive in Santa Cruz and in Bolivia in general. Internet resources are accessible and available to those who are able to use the Internet. It is also interesting to note that the pastor of MG was delighted when I gave him a copy of a book on biblical hermeneutics after the case study was over. He read it immediately with great interest and made comments about it to me afterwards. On the other hand, the pastor of the PG related during a personal interview that he was not very interested in increasing his Bible knowledge as such, and seemed to hold a rather skeptical attitude toward theological studies in general. This was in contrast to *pastora* (PG) who was the pastor's wife. She emphasized the importance of the Bible and often quoted lengthy biblical passages from memory throughout the CBS process.

Lazarus's plight. The MG mixed their own experience of lack, of those who lived in the streets, and even their natural environment (swarms of flies) to make sense of the text.

In the interpretation of the other texts (6:20–26; 12:22–34; 14:12–14), similar features were evident though from a different perspective. Daniel in the MG group juxtaposed the birds and the flowers with a sloth in his reading of the anxiety text (12:22–34). The pastor in the MG identified with the poor in 6:20–26 even though he had strong faith in God's provision of a better life. In the reading of Luke 14:12–14, José (PG) and many others saw themselves as potential givers of spiritual and material help rather than receivers, as was the case with the MG group.

It was also common for both groups to focus on a particular phrase, concept, or idea in the text and expound on it in light of their own experience and socio-economic context. This came across prominently in the reading of 12:22–34 where both groups discussed "seeking the kingdom" and its implications for life, which led to further reflection on God's provision, prosperity, and action-consequence theology. As such, the phrase in 12:31 "these things will be given," which in the text seems to be limited to food and clothing (basic necessities), was expanded to cover numerous other things in the believer's life.

One of the important interpretative strategies for the group was the personal and communal experience of the people. The pastor in the PG related his spiritual experiences, which were often linked to his personal life circumstances. He told a story in which God spoke to him about how a person could become a millionaire in an instant. This testimony was shared during a discussion on 12:22–34 and presumably was intended to highlight how one needs to "seek the kingdom" and be "inclined to the kingdom" to receive great material rewards. Ruben (MG) on the other hand related how God answered a prayer by providing transportation back home from a remote location, and the pastor (MG) gave a testimony of God's provision in times of a dire need. All of these stories highlighted God's care and provision in 12:22–34. They thus illuminated the text, provided an entry point into the text, and at times also acted as heuristic keys to its meaning.

Often other biblical passages and intertextual features provided an apt explanatory strategy as well. For example, the understanding of "the poor" in Luke 6:20 as humble was aided by the appeal to the parallel "poor in spirit" in Matt 5:3 in the PG. Rosa's (MG) allusion to the covenant blessings in Deut 28 provided a link to understand the beatitudes as well as discuss action-consequence theology in her own experience.

In all of the above interpretative strategies, there seemed to be a tendency to move back and forth between the text and the extra-textual features. The

extra-textual features were generally the individuals' or groups' lived experiences and were linked variously to the groups' socio-economic status, cultural background, and Pentecostal religious tradition.⁴ Overall, these aspects helped to highlight the text (or parts of the text), negotiate the meaning within the group process, and expand its meaning so that it became intelligible and relevant for the participants.

8.1.4 *Appropriation Strategies and Praxeological Effects of the Text*

Appropriation refers to the way the ancient biblical text is applied or made meaningful to present-day readers; praxeological effects indicate the (potential) actions that the texts prompt in the readers. As such, these aspects have to do with the forward aspects of the text and the reading process.

One of the distinct features of both groups was the fact that there were no attempts to delay the appropriation. In other words, only rarely did a group first attempt to make sense of the text as a whole on its own terms and then subsequently attempt appropriation.⁵ Rather, on several occasions, a group member felt free to look at one phrase and find an immediate personal connection to life. At times, it was difficult to know whether the participants were referring to a biblical phrase as such or whether they were encouraging a particular type of behavior or attitude in the group using the same phrase. In this way, the boundaries between reading the text and its appropriation became blurred. The practice demonstrated the subtle way the biblical texts were at times read and appropriated.

At times, there was a direct "correspondence of terms" between the biblical texts and its context and the interpreters and their context.⁶ Thus, when Jesus said to those who were hosting the banquet that they should invite the "poor, lame, and the blind" (14:12–14), Maria (MG) insisted that people need to invite the "poor, lame, and the blind" now as well. Despite this simple method of appropriation, correspondence of terms was not the only or even the main

4 As seen above, the Bolivian groups did not make a clear distinction between their life experiences and spiritual experiences as such.

5 Cf. de Wit ("Regados por los cerros," 330) indicates in his analysis of the Latin American phase of the inter-cultural Bible reading project (Part II) that the groups had a tendency to make a distinction between the textual horizon and its present-day meaning before moving to the appropriation phase. It is difficult to estimate whether this distinction was due to the ecclesiastical traditions of the readers or whether the number of theologically trained participants in many of the groups played a decisive role. Be that as it may, it is perhaps important to reiterate that no Pentecostal groups were involved in the project and the few individual Pentecostals who did participate were part of largely Catholic groups.

6 Cf. Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 146–153.

way that the groups appropriated the text. When it did occur it was used selectively. Sometimes the appropriation seemed almost like a reinvention of the textual meaning, such as when the pastor (MG) stated that “selling possessions” referred to “setting priorities.” Sometimes there was an analogical relationship between the interpretation and reinterpretation, and other times it was missing or found only as a rather distant point of contact with the text. At times, this way of reading seemed to soften the harshest demands of the text (e.g., “sell your possessions”); on the other hand, it helped the group members bring out a meaning that was better suited to their situation.

Occasionally, the textual meaning was investigated separately and was followed by appropriation. José (PG), who used this approach more than anybody else, sometimes drew creative analogies between the textual and historical context and present-day appropriation. Carina (PG) used a symbolic reading and occasionally referred to a *logos-rhema* distinction.⁷ According to this view, the biblical text may mean something rather different in the present-day situation than “then.” She did not proceed to draw analogies, however, but rather related the present-day meaning in a more symbolic manner.

The discussions that the texts prompted were a significant feature of the appropriation process. They were variously connected to the socio-economic status of the group and to the groups’ Pentecostal tradition. For example, during the reading of Luke 14:12–14, the MG pondered what they could bring as a gift when invited to a rich person’s birthday party so that they would not be shamed. On the other hand, while reading the same passage, the PG discussed the motives of giving and the practical difficulties of inviting people from the street to a party or a banquet.

An important aspect of appropriation that came across during nearly every CBS session was the action-consequence theology. This seemed to emerge due to its importance to the Bolivian groups as part of their dynamic relationship between theology and daily life. According to current biblical scholarship, the Lucan texts of the study do not refer directly to this-worldly divine retribution. Thus, as indicated earlier, it is possible that key words and concepts in the text, or even the simple relevance of the topic, prompted reflection on the issue. Be that as it may, this doctrinal key that bears similarities to the concrete covenant blessings and curses in Deut 27–28 seemed to function rather positively according to comments by the group members.

7 *Logos-rhema* distinction refers to how the biblical text can mean one thing in its historical context (*logos*) and something rather different in a present-day context when illuminated by the Holy Spirit (*rhema*).

The multitude of strategies that were used to expand the meaning of the text and make it relevant also opened the text to its appropriation. Thus, as related above, fusing the text and the group horizons, recontextualizing texts, identifying with narrative characters, and isolating certain textual phrases and concepts played important roles in appropriating the texts. It seemed that one important reason for the seemingly easy appropriation and fusion of horizons was the perceived similarity between the biblical stories and the readers' life context. Thus, the MG group members stated how the situation between the Rich Man and Lazarus was "the same" as their current context. The rich kept feasting and the poor remained in misery in Bolivia, according to the group's comments. In general, the PG's focus was more on the miraculous aspects that were found both in the text (esp. 6:17–19) and the current experience, whereas the MG referred more often to the group's experience of socio-economic discrepancies.

In terms of praxeological effects, there were few if any new actions per se that the discussions of these biblical texts prompted. Many of the presumably new issues remained at the level of suggestions or potential action rather than concrete reality.⁸ Of course, all of the new suggestions had potential to materialize into concrete actions or alternatively to generate new beliefs and attitudes. Though the PG generally focused less on socio-economic inequalities, some did make occasional suggestions toward changing society by their actions (esp. José). The MG on its part criticized a number of socio-economic and cultural practices and longed for a more just society.

Generally, however, the discussions seemed to confirm the groups' old patterns of praxis rather than create new ones. Daniel (MG), for example, encouraged the group members and reminded them of the urgency to continue to reach out to their community with their practical help and the word of God. *Pastora* (PG) reminded the group members of the importance of sharing one's testimony. Overall, praxeological effects were notoriously difficult to evaluate since a number of conflicting suggestions often arose in the discussions. Only if there were a consensus or a concrete plan could it be suggested that an actual praxeological effect had taken place.

8 It must be noted though that one of the groups that participated in the pilot project not only exhibited an interest in starting a new ministry to help the vulnerable children within their community but actually started concretely working on it after the study was completed. The pastor indicated that he had often thought about starting this kind of ministry but that the CBS process gave him the theological vision to do it.

8.1.5 *Heuristic Keys and Reading Attitude*

Heuristic keys refer to hermeneutical strategies or features that open up the meaning of the text for the readers. Reading attitude is the overarching stance in relation to the text and as such can be dogmatic, pietistic, liberationist, antagonist, and so on.

It seems that there was not just one identifiable heuristic key that was consistently applied to the text to open up its meaning. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned interpretive strategies often functioned as heuristic keys. Some of the most important keys for both groups were recontextualization and juxtaposition of the text with present-day experience, the various imaginative strategies, and the focus on certain features of the text that became an object of closer scrutiny in light of Pentecostal doctrine and praxis. At times the spiritual experience or testimony also seemed to open the meaning of the text. Hence, the text about worries and God's provision (12:22–34) opened up to the group as the pastor (MG) told how God had provided for him and his family during a time of need. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, these strategies were often employed side by side and no one strategy or key can be said to have been the most important or the determinative factor.

In terms of reading attitude, both groups could be characterized as employing *lectura creyente* or "believing reading,"⁹ which refers to an attitude that holds the Bible in high esteem and regards it as the Word of God. This view is not interested in critical scholarly interpretations, though it may exploit them when they provide something worthwhile for the reader. As such, this kind of reading attitude is a-critical, and is open to receive a message from God through the Bible at any moment and through any passage. It also seemed clear that a passage could have multiple meanings and speak to different individuals in different ways. On numerous occasions, the group members felt that God was speaking to them through their discussions of the biblical texts. There were no critical or suspicious remarks regarding the biblical texts per se.

Despite this lack of critical evaluation or attempts to see "the other" in the text, the participants were quite ready to appropriate the biblical text and message in the manner that seemed useful for them in their own circumstances. This way, the groups felt free to reread, interpret symbolically, or ignore parts of the text. At times, these practices were justified by an appeal to the Spirit's guidance, while at other times no reasons were given. For example, the pastor (PG) stated that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus had nothing to do with being rich. He further indicated that the devil had deceived many people into thinking this way. Overall, though the texts were taken at face value

9 Cf. Chiquete, "Theological Education," 4.

and without further criticism, it was not always clear what the text's deeper or symbolic interpretation, let alone its appropriation, should be for the group or individual. It seemed that the collective discernment process and negotiation of meaning helped direct the "believing readers" to find a pertinent appropriation individually and collectively. This kind of symbolic and spiritual appropriation strategy revealed how labeling Pentecostal reading attitude as fundamentalist, concordist, pietistic, or the like is overly simplistic.

8.1.6 *Attention to the Tradition of Interpretation, Contemporary Context of Interpretation, and to the World behind Interpretative Processes*

Attention to the tradition of interpretation refers to an awareness of the history and tradition that one is part of as an interpreter or interpretative community. Contemporary context of interpretation and the world behind interpretative processes refer to awareness of one's own context as well as the ideologies and power relations respectively that influence the hermeneutical processes of the readers.

It is hardly surprising that the group members were unaware of the history of Pentecostal hermeneutical tradition as such. After all, both churches were started just a decade or more ago and the focus of Pentecostal hermeneutics was a present reality rather than in the past. Further, Pentecostalism in Latin America did not reach Bolivia until 1921, making it not quite 100 years old.¹⁰

Nevertheless, both groups were aware of certain aspects of their hermeneutical context, particularly as they reflected on their own views against those with whom they disagreed. Thus, the pastor (MG) related how the "majority of brothers" in his conglomeration of churches, and even some in his own congregation, viewed God's rewards as mainly otherworldly as opposed to the improvement of life in the here and now. The pastor seems to have consciously countered these tendencies in parts of his readings even if he admitted the difficulty of obtaining this-worldly rewards or moving up the social ladder. Further, both Daniel (MG) and the pastor (MG) opposed a type of prosperity theology that saw a simple connection between a person's material prosperity and spiritual accomplishments. Similarly, members of the PG distanced themselves from prosperity theology, though the pastor (PG) seemed to reflect a view that was nearly identical to it despite his statements to the contrary. José (PG), in his readings, was the only one who pointed out with any consistency the importance of social consciousness of the church. Thus, he betrayed awareness of the larger societal and ecclesiastic ideologies that ignored the

10 According to Chambe (*Teología pentecostal*, 38–41), the Pentecostal movement was initially brought to Bolivia in 1921 by Swedish missionaries.

poor and seemed to incorporate this partially into his comments. He did not name or mention though what these ideologies or views were.

The MG was aware of its own precarious socio-economic situation, religious marginalization, and corruption in the society. This came across clearly in the group's comments and the pastor's identification with the literally poor. Further, the MG group's reflection on God's predestination of the poor and rich as well as the criticism of the affluent in society betrayed their awareness of their hermeneutical context. Though they often paid attention to the contextual (both socio-economic and cultural) and theological aspects of their own context, the group had less unanimity in how to tackle the difficult situations. The PG seemed to discuss their socio-economic context somewhat less except when it dealt with corruption. Further, it often appeared that José was the only one who brought the socio-economic context to bear in the reading of the texts. When he was absent, the pastor's spiritualizing focus dominated.

Overall, the MG seemed to be more consciously aware of their marginalized position and context, whereas the PG referred less explicitly to their hermeneutical context and socio-economic privileges. Neither group made explicit attempts to situate their reading as a whole into a broader ideological or societal framework. This was hardly surprising since Pentecostal communities generally lack the kind of conscientization processes and popular pedagogy found in CEBs. Yet, José commented about the importance of the church's social responsibility. Discussions such as why the poor remain poor and the rich remain rich, and what God thinks about the contrast, did not advance beyond occasional comments, though there was one discussion by the MG on God's role in determining people's socio-economic situation. In addition to this, the MG expressed critique of the social inequalities in society and the church. The pastor (MG) also stated that the Rich Man would have avoided hell had he practiced "biblical principles" of sharing. Generally, amassing wealth was considered wrong, though at the same time it seemed possible that a rich person could be saved. As such, connections to social structures and ideology were not made. Similarly, the PG did not ponder why they were in a privileged socio-economic position and why so many others lived in misery. The pastor's comments (PG), however, might imply that an important reason for this was people's lack of faith or their failure to accept his particular understanding of Pentecostal faith.

Finally, neither group reflected or commented on how their larger Pentecostal hermeneutical tradition may have influenced or distorted their readings. The groups' own Bible reading methods were not questioned, and important appropriation strategies, such as action-consequence theology,

were not critically reflected on. This is hardly surprising, however, since not even biblical scholars do this frequently.

8.1.7 *Group Dynamics*

Both groups exhibited positive group dynamics, cooperation, and respect of differing opinions. The CBS process helped in framing the interview process and gave an opportunity for everyone to share opinions if they wanted. The group format and the buzz groups also gave each participant some time to process and formulate opinions before sharing them with the larger group.

It was clear that the leaders in both groups, namely the pastor and *pastora*, were the authoritative figures. Thus, it was perhaps surprising that they did not generally dominate the group discussions or try to use their influence to impose their views. It was only occasionally that the pastor in the PG tended to use his influence to steer the group, and even then it was through his personal experiences rather than explicit appeal to his own, God's, or other forms of authority. Similarly, the variety of group opinions was generally accepted and there were no attempts to use polemics or aggressively challenge each other's views. Perhaps the only exception to this was when *pastora* (MG) stated that God was not necessarily on the side of the poor. On a few other occasions, the discussions became intense as the opinions differed, as was the case when José and others discussed the motives of giving. Overall, both groups' discussions incorporated an abundance of humor, liturgical elements such as prayer, and functioned positively and cohesively.

So far, this section has analyzed the varying hermeneutical dimensions of the Bolivian groups' readings. Though the groups' socio-economic status was referred to from time to time, the question of how this potentially influenced the reading has not been answered yet. This is the focus of the next section.

8.2 *Socio-Economic Status and Hermeneutical Processes*

It has become apparent throughout the earlier chapters (chs. 2–7) that the two Bolivian groups came from and lived in rather different socio-economic circumstances. It has also been suggested that the socio-economic status of the readers influenced the hermeneutical processes of the readers. This section attempts to bring together this data and clarify it by answering the following questions: what were the main differences between the groups' hermeneutical processes in light of their socio-economic differences? To what extent is it possible to infer the influence of socio-economic status in the hermeneutical processes?

8.2.1 *The Influence of Socio-Economic Status on the Hermeneutical Processes*

The individual differences and opinions within both groups was one of the most difficult aspects of drawing conclusions regarding the influence of socio-economic status. There was no one uniform group view, and at times individuals within each group brought forth conflicting opinions during different phases of a single reading. This perhaps was clearest during times in the PG when the pastor and José seemed to hold opinions that were almost polar opposites. Despite this difficulty, there were sections where the individuals in both groups seemed to hold uniform or similar opinions. When this was not the case, I try to refer to general tendencies and when relevant bring out the opposing views to balance the conclusions.

Overall, it seemed that the following aspects of the hermeneutical processes were influenced by the socio-economic status of the groups:¹¹ entry point into the text, foci and emphases within the text, symbolic-material spectrum of the text, and modes of appropriating the text. All of these aspects influenced the overall production of the textual meaning and its implications to the group members and their theology. Each of the above-mentioned aspects will be discussed separately and highlighted by examples from the case study results.

8.2.1.1 Entry Point Into the Text

Entry point into the text refers to a primary or important section of the narrative that provides the group an access to the textual world, be it a saying or story. Thus, a particular word, phrase, verse, or idea serves as a bridge between the readers' present-day experience or situation and the text as "the other."

It was clear that during the case study both groups found multiple entry points into the text; these were partially guided by the CBS process. The evidence suggests, however, that at times the group (or an individual within it) chose an entry point that moved the hermeneutical process forward and generated a number of comments on the part of the group members. Regarding hermeneutical processes, the question arose as to whether these entry points had anything to do with the groups' socio-economic status.

It was evident that in some instances the socio-economic status did not play a role. For example, both groups seemed to initially comment on the miraculous healings (6:17–19) that preceded the beatitudes (6:20–26) and as such provided an initial focus for the groups' comments. This seems to reflect the Pentecostal theology of belief in God's miraculous intervention rather than

11 Of course, this does not exclude other factors having an influence.

the socio-economic status of the groups. Doctrinal keys and Pentecostal tradition therefore played an important role in the selection of textual entry points.

The following examples, however, indicate that the socio-economic status of the groups did in fact influence the selection of entry points, in some instances. The sections highlighted here refer only to the spontaneous reading phase within the CBS process; that is, to the groups' initial response to the question, "What is the text all about?" Hence, it excludes any prior questions or hints as to what an ideal or suitable entry point to the text might be.

In the reading of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31), both groups placed a degree of emphasis on the irreversible nature of people's destinies in the afterlife. The MG's initial entry point into the text, however, was the explicit comparison of the lot of Lazarus and the Rich Man on *earth*. The comments focused on the misery of Lazarus and his miserable predicament vis-à-vis the Rich Man's sumptuous banqueting. The group's own status was brought to bear into the discussion as well. This initial entry point subsequently led to the theological reflection on God's role in the destiny of the poor and the rich at the present time.

The PG's initial entry point focused on two aspects. First, comments emphasized the irreversible nature of one's destiny in the afterlife and the importance of repentance for salvation. The second aspect highlighted the ambiguous nature of miracles to bring about conversion and repentance, both in the text and in the group member's present experience. *Pastora* furnished examples from her personal experience to illustrate this. After these initial comments, the group shifted focus to socio-economic realities of the parable. The pastor (PG) explicitly denied, however, that the passage was about socio-economic realities, and Carina seemed to be perplexed about the passage's insistence of the salvation of the poor Lazarus, since he did not seem to possess faith or other Christian virtues.

The second example came from reading Jesus' saying on the banquet invitation (14:12–14). The MG's initial entry point into the text was the importance of giving to the literally poor and needy per Jesus' command. While people outside the MG group were seen as the most needy (in need of food and clothing), the initial discussion led to criticism of the affluent and the exclusion that the group members had experienced due to concrete material lack. Thus, the initial entry point focused on the material and concrete aspects of the poor and the needy who were seen in the text and in the group's immediate surroundings and their own reality.

The PG's initial focus in 14:12–14 was two-fold. At first, money and wealth were seen as a blessing from God that should be shared vis-à-vis Jesus'

exhortation. This was connected to a promise of God's rewards. In addition, the poor, lame, and the blind in the text were initially interpreted symbolically and spiritually with little or no regard to possible literal aspects. José was an exception in this regard and insisted on a more concrete reference. Thus, the PG's initial entry point was mainly symbolical-spiritual and thus differed from the MG's more concrete entry point.

As was seen through these examples, the initial entry points into the text varied to some extent according to the groups. Further, the entry points also gave clues to the hermeneutical direction of the discussion and at times anticipated the focal point of the text for both groups respectively. Having indicated the entry points as a possible clue to how the socio-economic status influenced the hermeneutical processes of the groups, it is important to note that the entry points as such do not preclude the fact that the groups' interpretation could have converged later on during the reading process.

Finally, it might be objected that any group, regardless of their status, could have focused on the wealth discrepancies between the Rich Man and Lazarus, or that the banquet invitations could have been interpreted literally or symbolically. This is a valid argument and does hold some truth. After all, José did focus on the material aspects in a number of cases though he was part of the PG. This dilemma will be discussed in more detail below.

8.2.1.2 Foci and Emphases within the Text

The foci and emphases on certain parts of the text mean that distinct textual sections are given preference over others. After all, it is impossible to give equal weight to every part of a narrative or saying. With this in mind, it is evident that both Bolivian groups made certain interpretative decisions that excluded others. The crucial question here was whether these differing foci and emphases had anything to do with the groups' socio-economic status.

As stated above, it must be noted that the foci and emphases on certain parts of the texts were not always different between the groups. For example, both groups focused on "seeking the kingdom" and its implications in their reading of 12:22–34, and in the reading of the Zacchaeus story, both emphasized the theme of corruption and Zacchaeus's transformation. While the former betrays a link to Pentecostal theology, the latter reflects the larger socio-political context and experiences of the groups. When a difference in textual focus was evident, it had more to do with the way a particular section was interpreted rather than the selection of the textual section as such. On at least some occasions, however, the focus and emphasis could be traced to the

socio-economic differences between the communities. Perhaps the most obvious example is the groups' reading of 12:32–34.

The main foci of both groups in 12:22–34 was “seeking the kingdom,” worries, and God’s provision. Significant differences emerged, however, as both groups were asked to expound on the 12:32–34. The MG elaborated on the idea of “selling and giving to the poor,” even if many actually toned down the notion of total divestiture in the passage. In other words, the group members commented on the text and its meaning even when they elaborated its meaning in different ways. On the other hand, the PG hardly commented on the passage at all, and only occasional comments made mention of the importance of accumulating riches in heaven. This, however, was not connected to selling one’s possessions but rather to a proper attitude. Thus, the PG as a whole did not see 12:32–34 as an important section of the larger passage (12:22–34), and when it was commented on the emphasis was placed on heavenly treasures rather than the fearless selling of possessions on earth. In contrast, the MG expounded on the passage with a degree of enthusiasm and emphasized the importance of giving to the needy with a fearless attitude as well as having correct priorities in life.

The second example came from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31). The MG group used imagination to focus on the concrete circumstances of Lazarus and the Rich Man. The conditions of both individuals were described in vivid detail and the community’s own situation was partially fused with the story. Lazarus’s predicament was the epitome of “non-life” as he spiraled downward until his death. The reading of the parable also emphasized sharing of what one had with those in need.

The PG spent much time in pondering the fate of the Rich Man. The reasons for Lazarus’s fate were not as important apart from initial curiosity by Carina. The Rich Man’s doom was attributed to being “proud, haughty, and insensitive,” and the economic dimension was toned down. Thus, the attitude of the Rich Man became one of the primary foci of the group and was connected to his miserable fate. This found an echo in the group’s present-day experience as they encouraged each other to have godly attitudes.

Another significant difference in focus between the groups had to do with honor-shame dynamics. The PG members were amused as they pondered Zacchaeus’s tree climbing experience and the accompanying shame he must have felt as he was caught in a tree with his fancy clothes (19:1–10). The MG did not comment at all on this aspect nor ponder what kind of clothing Zacchaeus might have worn. For the MG, the experience of shame came across in Jesus’ banquet invitation (14:12–14). The group reflected on what it was like

to be excluded from a banquet due to the inability to fulfill an obligation in a reciprocity culture. The PG, on the other hand, did not ponder the predicament or the feelings of those who were the objects of Jesus' banquet invitations in 14:12–14. Seeing themselves as givers, their focus was on the motives of giving.

In the above-mentioned examples, the socio-economic status emerged as a possible hermeneutical factor and as such had a bearing on what aspects of the texts were focused on and emphasized. The MG focused on the sections of the text that emphasized the concrete and material circumstances of life (concrete selling of possessions and giving in 12:32–34; material depravity/wealth of Lazarus and the Rich Man respectively in 16:19–31; shame due to poverty in 14:12–14), whereas the PG tended to focus on aspects that were related to abstract-spiritual and attitudinal dimensions of life (treasure in heaven in 12:32–34; Rich Man's postmortem fate in 16:19–31 is linked to wrong attitude; Zacchaeus's feelings of shame due to getting caught in 19:1–10). Again, objections might be raised regarding the validity of these conclusions. Suffice it to say that though other interpretations of the data may be possible, it seems that the cumulative weight of the arguments above is noteworthy.

8.2.1.3 Symbolical-Material Spectrum of the Text

Symbolical-material spectrum of the text refers to the level of abstraction or concreteness of a given word's meaning within the text, which applies both to a word's sense and the reference. In other words, the spectrum has to do with whether a word, sentence, or a section in the text is understood to refer to material and concrete realities, or to abstract, spiritual, or symbolical ideas.

In general, both groups exhibited various degrees of abstraction as they read the text. For example, both groups emphasized the importance of having the right attitude toward material possessions. On several occasions, however, the PG interpreted phrases and sections of the texts symbolically and abstractly. This was often connected to a tendency to spiritualize the meaning of the text and/or find primarily a moral sense or reference. The following will illustrate the differences between the groups in regard to the symbolical-material spectrum.

In the reading of the beatitudes (6:20–26), the MG focused more on the material and concrete reference of the poor and hungry than the PG. Thus, the poor were objects of God's favor and exhibited positive virtues, whereas the rich were characterized by wealth, exploitation, and power according to the MG. The PG opined that the poor and hungry referred first and foremost to "spiritual poverty," or a person's humility and correct attitude, and the rich were the arrogant who ignored God but were not necessarily wealthy as

such. Despite these tendencies, it must be noted that both groups exhibited differences of opinions (cf. José in PG; *pastora* in MG), and the PG members also made references to the concrete material references of the text, though poverty per se received less attention. Yet the tendency of each group was noteworthy; a similar trend was evident in the reading of 14:12–14.

The other example concerns the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31). In the case of the parable, the symbolical-material spectrum had more to do with larger segments of the story rather than individual words or phrases. This was most obvious as the pastor (PG) noted that the meaning of the parable was usually misunderstood. That is, in his opinion, it had nothing to do with wealth or being rich. Once again, the PG emphasized the spiritual nature of the parable and emphasized the importance of inner attitude rather than the concrete material aspects. On the other hand, the MG focused on the concrete material conditions of both characters and saw an important connection between that and the characters' lot in the afterlife. They opined that the reasons for Lazarus's bliss were his poverty and misery (e.g., Daniel) or God's sovereign choice (e.g., *pastora*). Since his life was focused on survival, there was not much time left to focus on God (Daniel). Further, the pastor (MG) stated that the Rich Man might have avoided hell had he shared with Lazarus. The PG members were perplexed regarding the fate of Lazarus, with some suggesting that it was because he did not curse the rich (Tanya) or that his misery made him seek God (Carina). These examples illustrate that both groups exhibited tendencies in their readings along the symbolical-material spectrum that can be traced, at least in some instances, to the socio-economic conditions of each group.

As with the other section, it is possible that the level of abstraction that was posited by the readers had nothing to do with their socio-economic status. José in PG and *pastora* in the MG to some extent illustrated this aspect. Yet it is noteworthy that *pastora* did not consistently interpret the passages in the abstract or spiritualizing plane. Her objection mainly focused on attributing higher spiritual status (or sensitivity to God) and God's favor on those who live in poverty. Despite individual differences, the overall tendency of the group cannot be ignored and seems to point to the influence of socio-economic status as a factor in the interpretative processes.

8.2.1.4 Modes of Appropriating the Text

While the appropriation strategies of the groups were analyzed earlier in detail, this section focuses on the way socio-economic status may have influenced the forward aspects of the text; that is, the discussion that the texts prompted and

the way they were used and appropriated in the life of the community and individuals. This also includes the way texts were used to justify theology, doctrinal positions, or actual practice.

The modes of appropriation provide perhaps the clearest examples of the influence of socio-economic status, particularly regarding the discussions that the texts prompted. This came across on numerous occasions but only the most important examples will be used to illustrate this.

The MG members spent considerable time discussing their precarious situation from different angles. These discussions were variously prompted by the texts or by the texts in conjunction with the CBS process. It was pointed out earlier that 14:12–14 prompted discussions on the social inequalities in society and the church. Group members longed for a more just and equal society even as they felt powerless to move up the social ladder. In the reading of 12:22–34, they sarcastically expressed their critique of the affluent in society and the discrimination they faced as members of a Pentecostal poor class. Even if they had a desire for upward mobility, it seemed more like a distant dream than attainable reality. Similarly the beatitudes (6:20–26) prompted a lengthy discussion on discrimination and the violence that group members had experienced due to the stigma of poverty and their Pentecostal faith. A closely related topic emerged during the reading of 16:19–31 as the group pondered whether God had predestined the rich to be rich and the poor to be poor. As mentioned earlier, the responses varied from the importance of having strong faith and free will to the idea of a predestined lot of the poor and rich. Finally, the many concrete worries and anxieties of the group members came across as they shared their experiences in light of 12:22–34.

As a point of contrast, most of the topics mentioned above were missing from the PG's discussions. There were discussions on sharing and generosity throughout the readings, and they were generally instigated and commented on by José. Poverty and social marginality were touched upon a few times but not as a lived experience. The appropriation of numerous passages revolved around the attitude of one's heart, the importance of placing one's trust in God rather than money, and the importance of having faith. In addition, numerous texts seemed to prompt a discussion on money and wealth as a blessing from God. The fate of Lazarus (16:19–31) seemed to pose somewhat of a problem for the PG, since he did not possess explicit faith, repentance, or other indications of salvation. As discussed earlier, Lazarus' entry into Abraham's bosom did not seem to pose a problem for the MG members.

Perhaps one of the greatest, yet in some sense subtlest, difference emerged in the groups' discussions on action-consequence theology. Most of the texts

prompted at least a few comments on action-consequence theology, though the bulk of comments emerged in connection with the beatitudes (6:20–26), the anxiety saying (12:22–34), and the banquet invitation saying (14:12–14). It is perhaps noteworthy that two of these passages include the key word “blessed” accompanied by a promise (e.g., 6:20; 14:14) and a similar promise-fulfillment pattern is evident in 12:31. Though both groups elaborated extensively on the action-consequence theology, and both seemed to understand its basic mechanism in an almost identical fashion, the qualitative results were rather different in practice.

The PG emphasized that God blesses the faithful with material wealth provided that one possesses faith, practiced giving, and acted uprightly. The resulting blessing from God was material wealth to the point that one might become a millionaire. Of course, there were nuances and not everyone approved of such amounts of wealth, but the general pattern seemed to hold that God blesses the faithful with great riches and material wealth as a response to faith and obedience. In order to support this idea, the pastor shared his testimony of receiving a large inheritance after a personal financial crisis and the accompanying revelation from God, and he credited his success largely to his strong faith. In addition, the group members’ money discourse, which was often connected to the action-consequence theology, emerged on numerous occasions during the CBS process.

Members of the MG also incorporated action-consequence theology into their readings; however, they framed God’s ensuing blessing on a more general level, and the concrete references indicated that the main point of God’s blessing was that one’s needs were being met. On a few occasions, some group members commented that God’s blessings may go beyond basic necessities, but wealth was not mentioned in any of the discussions. The MG also warned against the deceit of prosperity theology, which lured people into thinking that spiritual blessing and material conditions were intimately connected.

Overall, it seemed that one could not avoid the conclusion that at least some PG members used the biblical texts to justify their notion of action-consequence theology and give support to their material wealth and privilege. While José betrayed an awareness of the church’s social responsibility, and other group members repudiated the idea of prosperity theology as such, the pastor seemed to make a connection between a person’s faith and socio-economic status.

On the other hand, the MG members did not express such ideas between wealth, faith, and God’s blessing. At least occasionally, they struggled to make sense of God’s goodness in light of their socio-economically precarious

situation. Yet, in general, Daniel and others (MG) opined that action-consequence theology motivated them to do good and right things in life.

In light of the discussion above, it seems clear that the socio-economic status of the groups influenced the way they appropriated the texts. In addition, there were indications that action-consequence theology found a suitable locus in each groups' lived experience, even if the focal point was understood differently.

8.2.1.5 Hermeneutics and Socio-Economic Status

As the examples above indicate, the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that the groups' socio-economic status played a role in the hermeneutical processes. It might be possible, however, to posit an alternative interpretation for the differences. For example, individual group members at times interpreted the texts in a way that contradicted the overall conclusions. Further, the methodological difficulty of isolating individual factors in empirical research for precise measurement was already indicated in chapter two. Thus, it might be argued that it is not possible to determine whether socio-economic status was a significant factor. After all, the differences might be just coincidences or due to unknown factors. Despite these objections, it seems that conclusions above do point to the influence of socio-economic status. In addition to the case study data presented earlier, this can be supported by theoretical studies on poverty and the connection between socio-cognitive processes and hermeneutics. To the extent that they support the earlier conclusions, these factors will be briefly presented here.

Though it is difficult to define or theorize about poverty since it is such a multidimensional phenomenon, recent sociological and psychological research has produced many important insights in this area.¹² One of the practical implications of these studies is the urgency to listen carefully to the views of the poor themselves and involve them in decision-making processes.¹³

12 For attempts to categorize and define poverty, see e.g., Ana C. Bastos and Elaine P. Rabinovich, "Being Poor: Cultural Tools for Survival," in *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology* (ed. J. Valsiner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Cited 10 September 2013. Online: <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195396430.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195396430-e-25>; Deepak Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* Cited 15 October 2013. Online: <http://www.rrojasdatabank.info/voices/vol1.pdf>. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30–64; Kothari, *Poverty*, 83–96; Eitzen and Smith, *Experiencing Poverty*, 1–20, 39–43, 60–63.

13 E.g., Bastos and Rabinovich, "Being Poor." In sociology, "sociological imagination" refers to a theoretical perspective that attempts to view social reality from the perspective of "the

In this regard, Latin American liberation theologians were right as they pointed out the importance of poverty as a hermeneutical factor.

Though the experience of poverty is difficult to define and varies depending on the location,¹⁴ there are a number of factors that are common to many people who live in poverty. Laura Smith states that there are four themes that characterize life in poverty: life without basic necessities (e.g., food, health services, housing, security), ongoing chaos due to insecurity and unpredictability of life, stigmatized social position, and persistent ideals about work and family.¹⁵ Similar findings characterize poverty research on a global scale,¹⁶ even if the emphasis on the most important factors for each culture and community varies. Further, in non-Western contexts, societal corruption, the gender gap, and a sense of powerlessness seem to be more pronounced than among the poor in Western countries.¹⁷

In the present case study of the Bolivian groups, three factors related to poverty stood out in particular. These were the insecurity regarding the basic necessities of life, social stigma and discrimination, and societal corruption. Each of these was related to the theoretical perspectives on poverty mentioned above. Thus, according to the MG's reports, since life is characterized by lack, societal stigma and discrimination, and powerlessness in the face of corruption, it came as no surprise that these aspects occurred in the group discussions with some frequency. It is then only logical to think that this was one of the main reasons why the MG members focused on these particular aspects within the biblical texts as well. They not only discussed these features in the appropriation section, but they emphasized sections within the texts that were most relevant in their experience. This conclusion gains more strength from

other." In the present book this perspective is presented as an attempt to listen to the poor and letting their voice be heard.

14 Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor*, 30–64.

15 Laura Smith, *Psychology, Poverty, and the End of Social Exclusion: Putting Our Practice to Work* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 2010, Kindle loc. 1492–1809. See also, Eitzen and Smith, *Experiencing Poverty*, 1–20, 39–43, 85–87, 105–108, 116–119, 134–136, 145–146, 155–157.

16 Deepa Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices from 47 Countries*. Cited 15 October 2013. Online: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPOVERTY/Resources/335642-1124115102975/1555199-1124115187705/vol1.pdf> (Oxford University Press, 2000), 22–45.

17 Compare the lack of discussion, particularly regarding societal corruption and the gender gap, in Eitzen and Smith, *Experiencing Poverty*; and Smith, *Psychology, Poverty*; as opposed to Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor*, 39–42, 82–127, 175–216; *Voices of the Poor: Voices from 47 Countries*, 109–132.

two further theoretical insights. First, as discussed in chapter one, Pentecostal hermeneutics generally is considered relevance-driven and pragmatic and thus oriented to practical rather than abstract realities. Second, according to studies on socio-cognitive processes, people tend to look for points that are relevant to them and their situation.¹⁸ That is, the thinking processes of people and groups (not just Pentecostal hermeneutics) are relevance-driven and focus on those aspects that find a point of contact between their life circumstances and cognitive processes. In light of this, it is possible to see how the mind's search for relevance might be connected to the hermeneutical processes here as each Bolivian group searched for sections, themes, and aspects of the text that seemed relevant and important in their respective socio-economic situations. The fact that there were one or two individuals who did not conform to the pattern does not negate the general conclusion.

8.3 Empirical Hermeneutics and Academic Biblical Scholarship

In chapters 3–7, I explored at length the two Bolivian groups' views of passages in Luke's gospel to historical, scholarly readings of the same passages. I then pointed out that each interpretative community looked at the texts from their own vantage point, and despite the many differences, some points of similarities were detected. This section aims to evaluate to what extent the Bolivian groups' readings may open up new perspectives or make a contribution to biblical scholarship, particularly as related to the historical readings of Luke's gospel.

It was pointed out that only on rare occasions could it be said that the Bolivian groups' readings had generated significant insights for historical scholarship.¹⁹ Yet, since professional biblical scholars have been mulling over these texts for well over two centuries, it might be considered surprising if a small group of Bolivian readers would find anything at all new in them. After all, they sat down for an hour or so on a few occasions to discuss the texts in a setting familiar to them. It will be argued, however, that at least some comments and

18 Malley, *How the Bible Works*, 105–108, 152–156. Malley draws from the theoretical framework of Sperber & Wilson (1995).

19 The notion of comparison, and particularly the idea of finding completely new insights, is a bit unfair. After all, biblical scholarship includes hundreds of professional readers from various countries who have dedicated decades of research into these texts. On the other hand, the Bolivian groups contain in comparison only a few individuals who employ the texts existentially and for religious devotion in their respective communities.

insights of the Bolivian groups might prove useful to biblical scholars as they interpret Luke's gospel and other ancient texts. In that sense, it is better to talk about fresh perspectives, different viewpoints, and scholarly tendencies rather than limit the discussion to factors that were previously completely unknown or unheard of.

Regarding Luke 14:12–14, Maria (PG) pointed out the revolutionary nature of the passage, and José's hypothetical banquet invitation illustrated the difficulty of crossing socio-economic boundaries. As such, the radical notion of this saying has not gone unnoticed by biblical scholars, and the difficulty of upward social mobility is also commonly acknowledged. The Bolivian groups' comments may be insightful, however, in that they provided concrete examples of what it means to be on the receiving end of banquet invitations in a reciprocity culture. That is, they shed light on the sense of shame and powerlessness that accompany the low social position today as well as in the ancient world. Also, the Bolivian readers' comments point out what obstacles and objections those in the privileged position could potentially have had for excluding the poor. This data might be useful in verifying that, most likely, Luke directed this passage to the wealthy in his audience who perhaps were reluctant to share and include the marginalized into their social circles.²⁰ Further, in this light, the reluctance of the poor and the master's need to compel them to come join the banquet in Luke 14:23 also become more intelligible. This also gives clues to how poorer members in the audience might have responded to the saying. From the perspective of the poor, the saying could have stirred longings (and concrete actions?) for social equality but in some sense also objections if the poor did not have an opportunity to reciprocate in any way. Yet, to alleviate this dilemma, Luke seems to lay emphasis on God's ability to reciprocate on behalf of the poor. Lucan scholars rarely comment on this dual perspective.

The Bolivian readers' interpretation of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus prompted some comments that might prove insightful for biblical scholars as well. First, both groups emphasized the familiarity of the Rich Man and Lazarus with each other. The collective dimension of the reading also came across in some of the comments. According to *pastora's* (MG) comments, the *only person* (out of many) whom the Rich Man saw and knew in Abraham's bosom was Lazarus. This was connected to the men's physical proximity during their lifetime. While this might be a small detail, by implication it points out that all of the Rich Man's dead relatives and rich acquaintances (cf. 14:12–14) were in torment (thus the Rich Man did not see them). The detail

20 Recall Maria's (PG) spontaneous exclamation that she would not attend José's hypothetical party that would include the people from the streets.

then would highlight the social and collective aspects of the parable. The Rich Man's elite family and social network would have been of no help in the afterlife. Also, the five living brothers are implied to follow suit shortly after unless they hearkened to the law and the prophets.

In another instance, Juana (MG) pointed out how the Rich Man tried to negotiate his way out of Hades by directing his plea to Abraham (his social equal) rather than to God (not equal). This idea is found only cursorily in the research literature.²¹ Similarly, the focus on Lazarus and the perspective of the marginalized in Luke's audience has gained little scholarly attention, yet both of these elements were commented extensively by the MG group. Lazarus's condition was described as "non-life," and some of the reasons for his bliss in the afterlife were his utter destitution or God's sovereign grace. The reason for Lazarus's salvation has been a source of significant scholarly controversy and there is no unanimity. Similarly, Lucan scholars have not pondered how the poor members of the audience might have heard or perceived the message, let alone imagined what type of reactions this might have prompted in them. It must be noted that many of the comments by the Bolivian readers were drawn from their own experience and imagination. As such, they can hardly be equated with the ancient readers' comments. Nevertheless, they may be helpful as they highlight certain aspects of the texts that are lacking in standard scholarly literature.

Regarding the Zacchaeus story (19:1–10), the Bolivian groups emphasized the pervasiveness of corruption in their own context as well as in the biblical narrative, which is an aspect that is not discussed much in the scholarly literature.²² On the contrary, for the Bolivian readers, this played an important role in their characterization of Zacchaeus and their reading of the passage. On a number of occasions, the Bolivian readers also emphasized Zacchaeus's personal characteristics, such as his stature and the related interpersonal problems. Though there were various opinions regarding the details, the overall stance was that there was a connection between Zacchaeus's stature, his

21 Perkins, *Hearing the Parables*, 70–71; Herzog seems to follow her (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, 124–130).

22 E.g., Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 1218–1226; Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope*, 106–109, hardly mention the idea at all. Zacchaeus's individual status as "lost" is generally emphasized and at times connected to his corruption or alignment with the Roman toll collecting enterprise. Donahue, "Tax Collectors and Sinners," 39–71; Michel, *TDNT* 8:88–105.

corruption, and rejection by the people. Apart from Parsons' illuminating article, these aspects have gone largely unnoticed by Lucan scholars.²³

Similarly, the honor-shame dynamics that were pointed out and discussed extensively by the PG has received relatively little attention by biblical scholars. This applied particularly to the idea that Zacchaeus was caught sitting in a tree. After all, adults, especially wealthy adults, do not climb trees. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Bailey is the only scholar who has emphasized that feature as he reads the story from the perspective of Middle-Eastern culture.

As demonstrated, both Zacchaeus's stature and the honor-shame dynamics in the story have received relatively little attention in Lucan scholarship. Even when they have been mentioned (apart from Parsons), most biblical scholars do not deem these features to be important. The Bolivian readers' insights should alert biblical scholars to take a closer look at these features and explore their importance in the narrative (as was done in my historical readings section). Had Parsons not written his article on ancient views toward physical stature, the Bolivian readers could be said to have come up with an extraordinary insight into this text. From another perspective, it is obvious that the Bolivian readers were and are completely ignorant of Parsons' article and thus can be credited with the reading even if their suggestions and details might not be as useful for strictly historical scholarship. Finally, the ideas regarding Zacchaeus's stature and honor-shame dynamics probably would have been obvious to Luke's original audience and thus would have highlighted the humorous aspects (as was indicated by the PG) and storytelling capabilities of Luke (and Jesus) as well as emphasizing the transformative power of Jesus in the narrative.

Another illuminating aspect of the case study has to do with the Bolivian readers' comments regarding action-consequence theology and its connection to the Deuteronomic ideas of retribution in Luke's gospel. As pointed out in chapter three, there seems to be a connection between the Bolivian readers' notion of action-consequence theology and the ancient ideas of this-worldly retribution. Thus, it is possible that interpretations of action-consequence theology among the Bolivian groups may shed light on Luke's ideas of wealth and poverty. That is, since the differences between Bolivian groups seemed to point to the influence of socio-economic status; it is also possible that socio-economic status is an important factor in how some ancient writers interpreted the notions of divine retribution in the Hebrew Bible. While full investigation would require a lengthy treatment that is not possible here, a few comments about ancient retribution theologies will be highlighted and then

23 See Parsons, "Short in Stature," 50–57.

compared to Luke's views of the same theme. This will further illustrate the potential benefits of conducting a critical dialogue between the Bolivian readers and biblical scholars. Before that, however, the Bolivian groups' comments on action-consequence theology will be briefly summarized.

Both Bolivian communities placed emphasis on the idea that God rewards good deeds and faithfulness in this life. If one obeys God, exhibits generosity, and strong faith, He will recompense the person with blessings. According to the PG's comments, the rewards given by God can be significant monetary compensations and wealth, whereas for the MG the reward was more modest; that is, the security of basic necessities and perhaps a bit more. It also seemed that at least some in the PG used the idea of rewards to give support to their privileged socio-economic status in society. The MG did not give explicit theological reasons for being poor but seemed to struggle with the idea as they pondered whether God had preordained the current social inequality that they were experiencing.

The discussions on action-consequence theology surfaced with some frequency, and there was usually a key word or thematic connection between the text and the ensuing comments. As indicated, however, biblical scholars have not explicitly connected divine retribution to the Lucan passages that the Bolivian readers read or to Luke's ideas of wealth and poverty in general.²⁴ Yet, what makes the notion of action-consequence theology relevant to the historical reading of Luke's gospel is the pervasiveness of the idea of divine retribution in the wider milieu of Luke's gospel. This raises the question of whether Luke or his audience would have been familiar with this idea and whether that would have had any bearing on their understanding of Luke's discourse about wealth and poverty.

It is well known that nearly every major book within the Hebrew Bible contains the idea of God's this-worldly and concrete retribution in some shape or form.²⁵ It is pervasive in the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomistic history, parts of wisdom literature, and the prophetic corpus.²⁶ Perhaps the most

24 For studies on the history of interpretation of Luke's understanding of wealth and poverty, see e.g. Metzger *Wealth and Consumption*, 1–13; Thomas E. Phillips "Reading Recent Readings of Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke and Acts," *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003): 231–269; John R. Donahue, "Two Decades of Research on the Rich and Poor in Luke-Acts," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson* (eds. D. Knight and P. Paris; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 129–144.

25 Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 181–201, 333–358, 373–384, 459–470.

26 E.g., Deut 8:17–18; 11:8–32; 27:11–26; 28:1–68; Josh 1:7–9; 22:4–9; 23:1–17; Judg 2:11–15; 9:56; 1 Sam 2:29–36; 12:13–15; Ps 112:1–10; Prov 10:3–7; 22:4; Isa 58:7–14; 59:1–19; 65:11–13.

important section includes the covenant blessings and curses in Deut 27–28. Walter Brueggemann has succinctly summarized that according to the Mosaic Law, “Israel envisioned a precise symmetry of act and outcome, so that those who obeyed received all the blessings of life . . . and those who disobeyed received a negation of life.”²⁷ The same basic idea appears in Israel’s wisdom literature as well.²⁸ According to wisdom theology, however, violations of God’s righteousness and order of creation do not need to be punished directly since every deed carries with it its inevitable consequences. Despite YHWH’s apparent invisibility, he is an integral part of the process.²⁹ This was, as Brueggemann stated, the “life-world in which Israel proposed to live”.³⁰

As is evident in a number of Jewish texts of the time, this same life-world and basic stance characterized the Second Temple period. Mark Mathews has indicated that the Deuteronomistic tradition about wealth as God’s blessing would have been familiar to all Jewish groups of the time, regardless of how it was subsequently interpreted in various texts.³¹

The crucial development that happened during the postbiblical period was the increasing tendency to postpone God’s rewards to the afterlife or age to come instead of this life.³² This is apparent, for example, in 1 Enoch 91–107, 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees.³³ For our purposes, it is interesting to note that a number of Second Temple texts retain the idea of God’s concrete this-worldly retribution, particularly as it related to possessions (e.g., Sir 7:32; 11:17–18; 31:8; *T.Ab.* 1:5; 4:11; 8:2–7; Philo *Praem.* 98–107; 127–136; *Ant* 1.13.1–4; 4.8.1–5; 8.2.1–2; 15.9.1–2; 20.2.4). This notion is sometimes used to justify wealth and/or give support to one’s position in society as well. On the other hand, some Second Temple documents vehemently deny a simplistic connection

27 Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 196.

28 There are dissenting voices to this basic notion in the Hebrew Bible as well, such as the book of Job and to Qohelet.

29 Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 337–338.

30 *Ibid.*, 196.

31 Mark D. Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful: Perspectives on Wealth in the Second Temple Period and the Apocalypse of John* (SNTSMS, 154; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Kindle loc. 4182–4185.

32 Shaye C. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (2nd ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 85–88; for various views of afterlife during postbiblical period, see Nicholas T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God* (vol. 3; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 129–206.

33 For a full range of opinions in various Second Temple texts about afterlife, see Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 150–206; James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 119–121.

between material wealth as a sign of God's favor (e.g., 1 En. 96:4; CD 4:12b–19a; 1QS 4:6–8).³⁴ These differences will be briefly illustrated with examples from the writings of Philo and the Epistle of Enoch (1 En. 91–107).

Philo's writings exhibit a dependence on the traditions of divine retribution in the Hebrew Bible. This is most evident in his treatise *De Praemiis et Poenis* (*On Rewards and Punishments*), which is framed around the covenant blessings and curses that are quoted, alluded to, and subsequently expounded in the writing.³⁵ Thus, the sections on blessings and curses respectively start: “[t]hese . . . will happen to those who obey God” (*Praem.* 98); and “[w]e must now consider the curses . . . against those who transgress the commandments” (*Praem.* 127). Rewards are promised to virtuous and punishments for the wicked, individually and collectively (*Praem.* 6–7; 57). As such, the ensuing blessings and curses affect the person's honor standing (*Praem.* 7), economic status (*Praem.* 98–107; 127–136), offspring and longevity (*Praem.* 108–113), body and health (*Praem.* 118–126; 143–146), and freedom (*Praem.* 137–141, 147–161).

It is important to note that God's blessing is portrayed as influencing the person's socio-economic standing; that is, both the tangible finances and social status. As such, virtuous persons are promised “wealth, which must of necessity follow peace and authority” (*Praem.* 98; cf. 99–101) and transgressors are threatened with “poverty and indigence, and want of all necessary things” (*Praem.* 127). Further, “heavenly inheritance” is connected to an abundance of good things on earth and both of these are linked to the person's virtuous status before God (*Praem.* 105).³⁶ As a caveat, Philo even mentions that should an unrighteous person possess wealth, it will soon be taken away and that “a more vehement sorrow may overwhelm them” (*Praem.* 105). It is clear that Philo's views in *Praem.* betray a close link to the notion of divine retribution and connection to Deuteronomic ideals. This seems to be further linked to God's justice in this life (*Praem.* 3–7; 149; 171). Similar ideas of divine retribution may be seen in Josephus (*Ant.* 1.13.1–4; 4.8.1–5; 8.2.1–2; 15.9.1–2; 20.2.4; *War* 7.11.4; *Life* 15)

34 Cf. Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 2670–3043.

35 Timothy H. Lim, “Deuteronomy in the Judaism of the Second Temple Judaism,” in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament: New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. S. Moyise and M. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 6–26. See e.g. *Praem.* 79 (Deut 30:10); 127 (Deut 28:33); 131 (Deut 28:23); 148 (Lev 26:36). See C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Complete and abridged; new updated version; trans. C. D. Yonge; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 664–681.

36 Contra Thoma Schmidt (“Hostility to Wealth in Philo of Alexandria,” *JSNT* 19 [1983]: 85–97), who hardly makes references to *Praem.* When he does, he plays down the concrete character of the blessings and curses.

and to some extent in Ben Sirach (Sir 7:31–35, 11:14–17, 12:1–7, 29:8–13, 31:8–11, 35:10–13).³⁷

In contrast to the above-mentioned writings, the Epistle of Enoch (1 En. 91–107) takes a different tack on divine retribution. While the Epistle affirms a basic idea of retribution (91:11–14; 94:1–5; 98:5; 104:1–9),³⁸ the rewards and punishments are postponed to the afterlife (103:1–4; 104:1–9).³⁹ 1 Enoch 91–107 also emphasizes that material prosperity in this life is not a sign of divine blessing or an indication of right stance before God (94:8–9; 96:4; 99:13–15; 102:9–10; 103:5–6). Quite the contrary, it is an indication of wickedness, since the current epoch is a time of “sinners, time of curse and . . . of plague” (102:5–6; also 102:9–10; cf. 108:8–9).⁴⁰ Thus, the Epistle exposes the self-deception of the wicked sinners by saying “your money makes you appear like the righteous, but your hearts do reprimand you like real sinners” (1 En. 96:4). In other words, wealth is not an indication of righteousness vis-à-vis covenant blessings but rather an indication of wickedness. Neither is the experience of oppression or powerlessness a sign of divine disapproval: “Do not say . . . We hoped to be the head and have become the tail” (1 En. 103:11; cf. Deut 28:12–14, 43–45). Both of these sections allude to Deuteronomy and the covenant blessings (Deut 8:17–18; 28:1–12; 28:12–14, 43–45) that were supposed to accompany faithfulness to the God of Israel.

It is interesting to note that many scholars have pointed out that the audience or community of the Epistle of Enoch had experienced oppression and probably consisted of relatively poor people.⁴¹ Thus it struggled with theodicy,

37 On Sirach, see Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 1891–2317. Mathews concludes by stating that Ben Sirach holds a “modified version of the traditional Jewish wisdom that maintains a theology of retribution while simultaneously acknowledging the issue of theodicy” (*Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 2317). Thus, Sirach holds that virtuous are blessed with wealth and abundance even if certain individuals may go through periods of deprivation. There is also a general hope that a righteous person’s lot will improve in this life. However, there are also ungodly sinners who may be rich presently (10:22–23; 11:21–22; 13:17–20). This leads to a lack of explicit social critique on Sirach’s part (Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 2307–2317).

38 George W. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 39–42; Rindge, *Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool*, 89–99; Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 1524

39 Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 39–42; Rindge, *Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool*, 94.

40 A similar idea is held by the Qumran community according to some of its writings, see details Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 3024–4043.

41 Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 63–64, 426–427; Rindge, *Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool*, 102; Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 1540–1546.

and the author attempted to counter the wrong ideas about divine retribution by using Deuteronomic language and allusions. The Epistle also hurls vengeance upon the wicked rich and assures the faithful that justice and eschatological bliss await them in the hereafter. Despite appearance to the contrary, the author is certain about the true nature of things. After all, he is privy to the heavenly secrets and thus able to disclose God's viewpoint on things (100:7–9; 102:3–11; 103:1–5; 104:1–7). Since the present situation is characterized by poverty, misery, oppression, and domination of wicked sinners, the divine reward is postponed by necessity to the afterlife.

In contrast, Philo (and Josephus) betrays a perspective of Hellenistic Jewish elite. Philo is generally considered wealthy and his brother was extremely wealthy.⁴² Though he at times criticizes the wealthy gentiles and idealizes the lifestyle of Essenes and Therapeutae, his emphasis is on the responsible use of wealth and blessings that accompany virtue.⁴³ In some texts, Philo laments the impoverishment of his fellow Jews (*Flacc.* 57–58) and praises the abundance of the Temple's wealth and Jerusalem priests' abundant provisions (*Spec. Laws.* 1.71; 1.133; 1.154, 156; 14.76).⁴⁴ In Philo's *De Praemiis et Poenis*, and to lesser extent in other writings,⁴⁵ however, divine retribution follows the pattern laid out in Deuteronomic blessings and curses as he interpreted them. Thus, wealth and prosperity are due to those who practice virtue and remain faithful to the covenant. Conversely, poverty, sickness, and defeat in this life point to wickedness and God's just punishment in the life of individuals and communities. Even if non-virtuous gentiles may be rich, they will soon experience a disaster (*Praem.* 105). Despite this perspective on divine retribution, Philo does exhibit a concern for the poor in other writings (e.g., *Virt.* 91; cf. *Spec. Laws.* 2.107), and thus his position on wealth and poverty are somewhat ambiguous.⁴⁶

A number of scholars have indicated that Luke's gospel embodies a number of Deuteronomic ideas as well.⁴⁷ Yet, these are not connected to the covenant blessings and curses as described earlier (cf. Deut 27–28). The closest

42 Thomas E. Phillips, "Revisiting Philo: Discussions on Wealth and Poverty in Philo's Ethical Discourse," *JSNNT* 83 (2001): 113–114; David Mealand ("Philo of Alexandria's Attitude to Riches," *ZNW* 69 [1978]: 258) states that Alexander, Philo's brother, lent 200,000 drachmas to Herod Agrippa so that he could cover the Jerusalem Temple gates with gold and silver. See also *Ant* 20.5.2.

43 Phillips, "Revisiting Philo," 118–120.

44 *Ibid.*, 115, 118.

45 Gerald F. Downing, "Philo on Wealth and the Rights of the Poor," *JNSNT* 24 (1985): 116–118.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Dietrich Rusam, "Deuteronomy in Luke-Acts," in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament: New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. S. Moyise and M. Menken; London: T&T Clark,

connections to this are the judgment of Jerusalem due to rejection of God's prophet (e.g., 13:34–35; cf. 21:1–33) and the coming eschatological judgment that accompanies the rejection of the prophet like Moses (e.g., Acts 3:22–26; 7:35–42).⁴⁸ As such, the focus seems to be on the eschatological rather than concrete consequences for the here and now, and these also were not directly connected to wealth and poverty or a person's social status in the current situation.

Despite this, it is possible to see links to divine retribution in Luke's gospel, though the notion is at times opposed rather than approved. Luke does not link wealth and status to God's blessing and approval in a similar way as Philo does (somewhat similarly also Josephus, Ben Sirach). If Luke wrote to an audience that included individuals from the wealthier and middling sections of society (PS3–4), this is perhaps noteworthy. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31), the beatitudes and woes (6:20–26), and Mary's song (1:46–55) in particular are examples of socio-economic reversals between the rich and the poor. This does not only break down the notion that wealth is God's blessing for virtue but points out to Luke's audience that mammon (cf. 16:11–13) often leads to judgment and destruction. In this respect, Luke's gospel has a close connection to the Epistle of Enoch, which also includes the reversal theme, but in the latter it is postponed to the afterlife (e.g., 97:1–10; 103:1–4; 104:1–5).⁴⁹

Luke demonstrates that the reversal is already present in the here and now, at least partially, due to the presence of the kingdom (esp. 6:20–26; 1:45–56). This comes across particularly in the ministry of Jesus as he prioritizes the poor and the marginalized (1:45–56; 4:16–21; 6:20–22; 7:22; 12:22–31; 14:12–24; 16:19–31), while most rich and influential reject the kingdom message (6:23–26; 12:13–21; 14:15–24; 16:14–15, 19–31; 18:18–30; 20:45–47). He also explicitly denies a direct correlation between people's sinfulness and Pilate's brutal acts, or the "accidental" collapse of Siloam's tower (13:1–5).⁵⁰ These calamities then are not

2007), 63–81; David P. Moessner, *The Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of Luke's Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 46–288.

48 Ibid., 84–114, 162–211.

49 Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, Kindle loc. 1680; Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 189–193. Luke also does not categorically reject the rich and invites them to repentance and salvation unlike the Epistle. It could be added that some Qumran documents also include the reversal theme (see Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful*, KE: 3379 who lists e.g., MSS 4Q285 8:4–12 and 11Q14 ii: 7–14).

50 Zachariah's temporary blindness due to unbelief (Luke 1:20) and the fate of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10) betray divine retribution that can be connected to unbelief and lying to God, respectively. On the other hand, the apostles' mistreatment and calamities

due to people's explicit sinfulness but rather were supposed to drive people to repentance.⁵¹

In light of this, it seems likely that Luke would have been well aware of the ancient conversations about divine retribution and its implications to his audience. Perhaps he knew of differing interpretations of divine retribution and the manner by which the rich tended to justify their privileged existence and perhaps simultaneously reject the poor.⁵² This was already pointed out in the analysis of 14:12–14.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Luke does not completely reject the notion of retribution even regarding concrete material blessings. This can be seen particularly in three passages (6:38; 12:31–32; 18:29–30). In 6:38, he encourages sharing and benefaction that is particularly aimed at the lenders.⁵³ The giver is promised recompense that is equal (or perhaps slightly more) to what was given. The saying probably views God as the agent of blessing per divine passive. Though the immediate context refers to forgiveness (and judging), the metaphor of a measuring vessel (μέτρον) points to concrete agrarian lending practices (6:37–38).⁵⁴ Thus, Kloppenborg is probably right when he notes that the reciprocal exchange in this saying is the social practice that is supposed to follow after love has been extended to enemies; likewise, the same applies to generous lending practices to those from whom one has little hope of receiving anything back (6:27–36).⁵⁵ Thus, 6:38 follows the saying about radical openness to the undeserving (6:27–36) and thus encourages benefaction, since God ultimately is the guarantor of the recompense. Though in 14:12–14 the reward points to the future, here in 6:38 the recompense seems to be more this-worldly, even if the focal point of the metaphoric saying remains rather general. In this

in Acts are not signs of God's retribution but rather due to opposition to the gospel. Finally, the Maltese think that fate (ἡ δίκη) would not allow Paul to live even though they survived the shipwreck (Acts 28:1–6).

- 51 Luke adds that there will be eschatological consequences to everyone who does not repent (13:5).
- 52 Luke's use and knowledge of the LXX indicates that he must have known the Deuteronomistic traditions about wealth as God's blessing.
- 53 John S. Kloppenborg, "Agrarian Discourse and the Sayings of Jesus: 'Measure for Measure' in Gospel Traditions and Agricultural Practices," in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (eds. B. Longenecker and K. Liebengood; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 104–128.
- 54 Cf. Kloppenborg, "Agrarian Discourse," 104–128.
- 55 Ibid.; compare this with Pilgrim (*Good News to the Poor*, 138) who connects this saying to "promise of future reward" or God's provision of daily needs. Neither of these seems to fit the saying or the context very well.

sense, it could be applied to judging and forgiveness in addition to the more concrete circumstances in which it was originally intended.

In 12:31–32, Luke points out that seeking the kingdom results in concrete rewards from God. As pointed out earlier, however, the benefits seem to be limited to basic necessities of life (food and clothing). Finally, 18:29–30 promises concrete material blessings to those who have left possessions to follow Jesus. Again, however, as seen earlier, Luke has considerably toned down the idea of this-worldly rewards and leaves them to a more general plane compared to Mark (see esp. Mark 10:29–30).

In light of the discussion above, it seems that Luke does not agree with the Epistle of Enoch or with Philo concerning divine retribution. He seems to explicitly disapprove the notion that wealth is a sign of divine blessing or an indication of virtue.⁵⁶ Luke's view thus seems to be closer to 1 Enoch 91–107, though he does not categorically exclude the rich from the kingdom (e.g., 7:1–10; 8:40–56; Acts 10:1–2) as the Epistle does. As such, Luke retains a tension between this-worldly salvation (e.g., 4:31–37; 5:12–26; 6:20–23; 19:9) and eschatological rewards (16:19–31).

Though the idea of retribution would merit a more in-depth analysis in Luke, early Christianity, and in the ancient world,⁵⁷ it seems that Luke retained a number of radical features of Jesus' tradition that he incorporated into the gospel. Many of these are part of Luke's special material (L) and some can be traced back to Q. Undoubtedly, they challenged the wealthier members in his audience, sought to break social barriers, and as such Luke embodied a social consciousness that was unusual in the ancient world (cf. Musonius Rufus). In some sense, Luke attempted to strike a balance between views depicted by Philo and the Epistle of Enoch, though he ends up being much closer to the Epistle of Enoch. He advocated a reversal of fortunes that anticipated the

56 Even in Acts, where one finds a number of wealthier individuals who are portrayed favorably vis-à-vis the gospel proclamation of the early church, there are no indications that wealth and reception of the gospel go hand in hand. On the contrary, Acts seems to emphasize the dangers of wealth, as money variously hinders advance of the gospel (8:18–24; 19:25–41), leads people astray (1:15–18; 5:1–11), and corrupts individuals (1:15–18; 5:1–11; 24:26–27). Generosity and helping the poor, on the other hand, seems to be connected to positive benefits (see esp. Acts 9:36–43; 10:3–8, 31, 33).

57 It would also be interesting to investigate how the different ideas of divine retribution and fate were understood in the Greco-Roman world. The idea of concrete retribution was held at least by some ancient Greco-Roman authors (see e.g., Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (trans. B. McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 64–68; cf. Acts 28:4; Kloppenborg, "Agrarian Discourse," 104–128).

eschatological reality. In this, priority is given to the poor and the marginalized. Yet, Luke also retained traces of retribution theology and did not postpone all of the rewards merely to the afterlife, as is the case in the Epistle of Enoch. Nevertheless, since the concrete references are generally lacking and at times Luke adapts his sources (e.g., Mark 10:29–30), the idea of retribution is generalized, and at other times the rewards are postponed to the eschatological future. Finally, the rewards or benefits in Luke seem to be primarily connected to the arrival of the kingdom of God and thus are not merely based on people's faithfulness or virtuous living as was traditionally understood.

Having said all that, the Bolivian readers' use of action-consequence theology is hardly identical with Luke or other ancient writers. In fact, one could say that the PG's view bears some similarities with Philo, though the ideas undoubtedly were drawn first and foremost from the Pentecostal tradition and its understanding of divine retribution in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁸ What Luke and the Bolivian groups do have in common is the view that God is actively involved and present in people's lives, even in the very concrete realities that touch individual's and communities possessions. Finally, both Bolivian groups alerted me to the influence of socio-economic status on present-day readers as well as potentially to the ancient authors and audiences.

Consequently, readers must evaluate whether the above examples are illuminating. There is no denial that ancient ideas of retribution, as well as the more detailed comments in other sections, and the general influence of socio-economic status can be investigated without reference to Bolivian or any other present-day readers. It seems to me, however, that, the concrete examples and the influence of socio-economic dynamics have opened up new perspectives on how the ancient ideas of wealth, poverty, and salvation could have been understood or heard by the first hearers.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the hermeneutical dimensions of the Bolivian readers. It became evident that historical and literary aspects of the text held little importance to the groups. For them, the focus was on their context and situation, and their perspective was influenced by the existing Pentecostal tradition and socio-religious experience. The readings tended to be relevance

⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, action-consequence theology also has a connection to the popular religions and indigenous traditions of the Americas.

oriented and strove for immediate appropriation. Still, both groups also spent considerable time reflecting on various socio-economic and theological topics that were connected to their context, albeit without reaching a consensus or definite conclusions. Generally, however, the appropriation of the texts did not bring about new praxeological effects but rather tended to confirm and encourage existing practices.

It was argued that the socio-economic status of the groups influenced the interpretation of the texts. This became evident in the analysis of the various hermeneutical dimensions that were related to socio-economic status. The conclusion found further support in the recent poverty studies and socio-cognitive research.

Finally, it was suggested that the analysis of Bolivian groups' use and interpretation of Lucan poverty texts was illuminating for biblical scholarship, at least in certain aspects. This became apparent in the analysis of the wealth/poverty theme in 16:19–31 and honor/shame dynamics in 19:1–10 and 14:12–14. In addition, Luke's and other ancient writers' views on divine retribution were highlighted vis-à-vis the Bolivian groups' readings and a connection was found between them. It was concluded that there seemed to be a correlation between notions of retribution and social location of Philo and the Epistle of Enoch (and perhaps other writings as well), and that Luke embodied a social consciousness that was relatively rare in the ancient world. These perspectives were partially reached by reflecting on the Bolivian groups' readings and the influence of the groups' socio-economic status in their hermeneutical processes.

Implications and Final Reflections

This study has sought to demonstrate that the ordinary readers' views and interpretative practices may make a contribution to scholarly readings of the ancient biblical texts. The critical dialogue that was conducted in chapters 3–7 also indicated one possible way to combine empirical study with scholarly exegetical work. As such, this study has also attempted to break old methodological boundaries.

Though it was argued that the insights of the Bolivian groups may be beneficial to biblical scholars, this does not mean that every ordinary reader, whether poor or rich, Bolivian or otherwise, will reveal extraordinary insights scholars marvel. In fact, many of the comments of the Bolivian groups did not reveal anything particularly insightful, and some readings were predictable, others somewhat shallow, and still others even ethically questionable. Further, the effort that would be needed to construct a valid empirical study of this scale may not be worth the time if the sole aim is to seek contributions for a scholarly historical perspective. In addition, when an empirical research involves poor and marginalized communities, this sort of motive might be ethically questionable as well. At the same time, benefits of empirical hermeneutics go far beyond making a contribution to a strictly historical analysis.

One of the strengths of empirical hermeneutics as a method is its concreteness; that is, it forces the biblical scholar to listen, observe, and analyze carefully the way texts are interpreted and used in a particular community, context, or group. In this sense, it gives a broad picture of interpretation of biblical texts in a given contextual reality. This may prove to be exegetically insightful or prompt the scholar to reflect on his/her own hermeneutical presuppositions. Further, empirical research may be harnessed to give a voice to the poor and marginalized, which makes it possible to let the poor speak for themselves, even if it is through a (translated) transcript. This may help others gain a deeper understanding of the struggles that a concrete community of poor in a particular location is going through, and at the same time to avoid their overt idealization.

As mentioned in chapter two, though the careful analysis of both the biblical texts, interpretative processes of the groups, and the contextual realities intends to give a thick and full description, it remains a scholarly reconstruction and representation of "the other." In this sense the group descriptions are "my story" as much as the groups' story. Nevertheless, I have argued that

the picture emerging from an empirical study is not only fuller than in other contextual approaches but also more transparent due to the importance of procedures and protocols in empirical studies. Thus, the reader is not led to believe, intentionally or not, that there is such an entity as an ordinary Latin American reader, or that CEBs or the approaches practiced in some studies are an accurate representation of popular Bible reading in Latin America. As such, it is also important to keep in mind that the readings of the Bolivian groups in this study do not represent all Pentecostals in Bolivia, let alone in Latin America. Had the study involved groups from more classical Pentecostal denominations, such as *Asamblea de Dios*, or the prosperity oriented Universal Church of Kingdom of God (*Pare de Sufrir* in Bolivia), the outcomes might have been different.

Nevertheless, the results of this study may be generalized to some extent when the hermeneutical processes of the ordinary readers here are connected to the theory of socio-cognitive processes. As Brian Malley (2004) has proposed, the mind tends to seek those aspects in the text or communication processes that are relevant to the reader. For a person who lives in a socio-economically precarious situation, issues related to poverty, exclusion, and marginalization are extremely relevant. Thus, it is hardly surprising that those issues generally would be emphasized and highlighted in the interpretation of the texts. Furthermore, this relevance-seeking orientation is hardly limited to an experience of socio-economic marginalization. Certainly it would include a number of other potential experiences or factors that are relevant to the cognitive processes, experience, and identity of the biblical interpreter. For the Bolivian groups, Pentecostal experience and belief in God's miraculous intervention were particularly important. For MG this is also connected to their social location and how they perceive God as the giver of hope and dignity in their daily struggles. The experience of the Spirit, which is not disassociated from social location as seen throughout the study, is an important facet that differentiates Pentecostal identity and readers, for example, from Latin American basic Christian communities.

The portrait of the Latin American ordinary readers as poor, politically active, Catholic members of the CEBs was briefly discussed in chapter one. In light of this study, Richard's and to some extent Mesters's depiction of ordinary readers' epistemological privilege may be seen with a fresh perspective. Richard in particular has argued that the poor and oppressed readers somehow "purify" the biblical texts of the ideological biases of the powerful, and that the liberation aspect of the process has awakened the poor as "new subjects of history" and as protagonists of their own destiny. The former claim regarding

“purification of texts” is not only vague but also exaggerated. It is true that the poor and the oppressed may bring important insights into certain biblical texts and living conditions in the margins. As the case study has demonstrated, however, these features should not be either exaggerated or homogenized. The situations of the poor and oppressed vary depending on the geographical and socio-cultural context. Richard’s and Mesters’ comments also seem to betray dynamics peculiar to the hierarchy of Catholic and, to a lesser extent, historic Protestant churches.

At the same time, in light of the Bolivian readers’ comments, it is true that the MG interpreted the texts from their perspective of marginalization and pointed out many important features regarding their experience within society and the church. Their interpretation of action-consequence theology vis-à-vis the PG group and the experience of shame and powerlessness should alert readers to the plight of the poor and the oppressed in Bolivia and elsewhere. In this sense, their readings expose unjust societal arrangements as well as their inability to change entrenched circumstances. It is this experience that also influenced the hermeneutical processes of the group and became one of the insights of the study for hermeneutics and global concerns for religion and social justice.

Nevertheless, the PG’s comments also brought forth insights into the texts and the social realities of their context. Moreover, it became apparent that the PG had two nearly opposing hermeneutical directions; one leaning toward prosperity theology and the other toward social concern. As such, José’s comments on social consciousness could also be thought of as “purifying” to some extent, per Richard. Hence, Richard’s comments seem exaggerated and lacking nuance in this regard. It is also noteworthy that though CEBs have a network of scholars and pastoral agents, Pentecostal groups generally lack these types of resources and networks.

It was argued earlier that the Bolivian groups’ interpretations may be useful for biblical scholars by providing exegetical insights into certain sections of biblical texts. Of course, the benefits of the Bolivian readers’ insights are perhaps even more pertinent for the purpose of hermeneutical reflection. Conversely, most Western biblical scholars are connected to academic institutions and live a comfortable middle class lifestyle with little exposure to poverty and socio-economic marginalization. In light of this socio-economic reality, interaction with the ordinary readers from various economic levels and cultures raises a spectrum of potentially helpful hermeneutical dimensions.

Nearly one hundred years ago, Ernst Troeltsch developed the famous principles of criticism, analogy, and correlation that are still widely accepted as

the foundational pillars of historical investigation.¹ This essentially means that the truthfulness and probability of an historical event is judged by comparing it to what is “normal, usual, and widely attested” in the current situation. As Bultmann noted a little later, people are conditioned by their pre-understanding as they study history and this certainly affects their understanding of what is possible and what is not.² In a person’s interpretative processes, a complicated web of personal history, socio-religious tradition, and academic formation coalesce to affect the idea of what is normal, usual, and widely attested. Nevertheless, what is one to do when faced with a socio-economic level, culture, or stream of tradition that perhaps is completely alien to one’s realm of experience? The encounter might force one to reevaluate his/her pre-understanding and perhaps the idea of what is possible or relevant—or more to the point in the realm of historical research, what is probable or plausible.

Let me attempt to briefly illustrate how this might affect hermeneutics and even exegesis. In one recent dissertation, the author commented on the “lapses of logic” in Luke’s scene of the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1–11). The author wondered about the “odd hazard” of loading the boat with such a huge catch and sees this, among other things, as an evidence of the composite nature of the scene.³ My intention is not to contest that this text might be a combination of previous traditions and Lucan editing. Rather, I am highlighting that when Luke relates the story of filling the boat with fish, it would not have been “odd” and thus involved no “lapses of logic” on Luke’s part. In light of the socio-economic realities of vast numbers of people in the two-thirds world, the idea that one could load a boat (or a truck) so full that it seems like a health and safety hazard from the Western perspective is actually quite realistic for someone living at the subsistence level.⁴ The reality of “not having enough” along with the practical arrangements that accompany life at the margins is generally outside of a typical Western academic scholar’s daily experience and, therefore, defies their common sense logic. What is “normal, usual, and widely attested” for most biblical scholars will be incomparably different for Bolivian slum dwellers, African peasants, or others who live in precarious situations.

1 Ernst Troeltsch, “On the Historical and Dogmatic Methods in Theology,” (1989) repr. in *Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. II.* (trans. J. Forstman; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913), 728–753.

2 On Bultmann’s hermeneutics, see Thiselton, *An Introduction*, 166–184.

3 Pesonen, *Luke and the Sinners*, 80–81.

4 For an insightful journalistic account of the hazardous travelling conditions of most of the two-thirds people, see Carl Hofman, *The Lunatic Express. Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2010).

Arguably then, an interaction with various social locations and different cultures is bound to enrich the field of biblical studies without diminishing the value of Western biblical scholarship. Thus, empirical hermeneutics, whether applied in the first or two-thirds world, may make an important contribution to biblical studies.

One issue that has not been reflected upon yet is the Bolivian readers' use of action-consequences theology. After all, it emerged as an important factor in the readings of both Bolivian groups.⁵ Perhaps to the surprise of some biblical scholars, this religious and practical doctrine is extremely important for global theological reflection, particularly due to its close connection to the so-called prosperity theology movement.⁶ It was argued earlier that action-consequence theology cannot be squarely equated with prosperity theology though it has close links to it. Though I do not pretend to solve the problem of prosperity theology, assuming it is a problem, I will make a few reflective comments regarding it based on the Bolivian groups' reports.

One of the most important observations of the case study was the application of action-consequence theology in each community. Both Bolivian groups interpreted the concept in light of their own socio-economic realities, which led to diverging implications. The larger question in light of this is how the action-consequence theology functioned in the wider socio-ecclesiastic context in Bolivia (and beyond). To put it plainly, is action-consequence theology, as it was understood and practiced in the communities, oppressive or liberating; did it function as a coping mechanism, or was it a means to justify socio-economic privilege?

It was indicated earlier that the MG experienced action-consequence theology positively, because it motivated group members to live an honest and good life. It also seemed to encourage generosity and communal sharing. In the PG, however, action-consequence theology was used to give implicit support to the socio-economic privileges, at least in some cases. Pastor (PG) also seemed to advocate an overly simplistic connection between faith, obedience, and material prosperity.

In light of this, it might be concluded that action-consequence theology functions positively in the MG and possibly also in other poor communities. It seemed to motivate communal sharing and endeavors to improve one's life. It should be noted that it is possible to foresee that action-consequence theology might also turn into a mechanism that leads to resignation once one

5 As mentioned, the same theological idea came across in several other Pentecostal churches where I visited during my stay in Bolivia.

6 See e.g., Yong and Attanasi, *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*.

realizes that the desired upward mobility does not materialize. In practice, however, I did not observe any comments to this effect among the MG members. Still, this ideological danger looms in the background. Theologically this development could presumably lead to a crisis of theodicy as well.

The dangers of action-consequence theology for the PG though, and by implication the MG, are much greater. It was already seen that the notion of prosperity probably led the pastor to state that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus had nothing to do with wealth or being rich. As such, his reading of the text seems to be simply mistaken. This is perhaps why the pastor had to justify his reading of the passage by stating that the devil had led astray many through this passage. Further, his simple connection between spiritual and material riches is troubling, as is the remark that “there are no poor in the kingdom.” This kind of theology, if allowed to influence concrete actions, may lead to a complete disregard of the churches’ social responsibility or to its crippling effects. To be fair, the pastor did not seem to bring the ideas to their logical conclusion and, at least in principle, he disavowed discrimination against the poor. Fortunately, many of the PG members rejected some of the pastor’s comments about prosperity and simplistic connection between material and spiritual wealth.

As such, action-consequence theology may be used to justify the discrepancies between the rich and the poor or to perpetuate the socio-economic *status quo* in societal and communal levels. In the extreme forms, it certainly may have a negative impact in a number of other ways, particularly if an overly close connection between faith and prosperity is forged. Should this sort of thinking be labeled “biblical” (i.e., authoritative) and allowed to influence politics or public policy, the consequences might be disastrous. As Pentecostal and charismatic churches continue to grow, these hermeneutical issues obviously will have socio-political implications that go far beyond the immediate church community, regardless of the churches’ explicit political involvement.

Despite this, the MG found action-consequence theology a source of inspiration and motivation in their lives. It probably helped individuals in the community to exert some sort of control in the limited range of choices they had in life, even if God’s providence proved to be the final arbiter in things. Yet, as was seen, some MG members were troubled by their socio-economic marginality and were wondering whether it was God’s will for them to be poor. In this situation, action-consequence theology was not criticized or reflected upon.

The reading of biblical texts from Luke’s gospel that dealt with poverty and salvation seemed at times to question the close connection between action and consequence. This came across particularly in Carina’s (PG) initial surprise about the salvation of poor Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31. Due to the strong

theological tradition to the contrary, however, the text was largely spiritualized and thus was moved to an attitudinal instead of a concrete level. This fact points to two important implications: First, the theological tradition of the ordinary readers is extremely strong. Second, a text that militates against the received tradition is difficult to reflect upon or appropriate without help from outside of the community. In this sense, the CBS process may be helpful, and the role of socially engaged, biblical scholars is important; however, the effects may not be conducive if the underlying theology is not directly exposed and challenged by the group members or the facilitator. As such, socially engaged biblical scholars may help foster closer reading of the text and discourage premature appropriation. S/he could also challenge the readers to reflect on the ethical implications of the texts and readings. Despite this potential, the power dynamics between the scholar and a group of ordinary readers needs further reflection. As a concrete tool, de Wit's intercultural Bible reading method might be useful, as it focuses on organized confrontation between groups of ordinary readers. The success of the interaction, however, depends on the group's willingness to remain open for interaction and dialogue. Further, in the case of strong ideological or theological stances, the partner group's comments might only remain an interesting idea or suitable for "their" context and realities.⁷ Be that as it may, both the theology of prosperity and action-consequence theology are important realities of the global Christianity that seem to gain more and more ground, particularly with the rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Yet, these theological concepts, as has become clear, are not interpreted or appropriated in a singular fashion in various social locations and cultural contexts. In general, there is a need to investigate this area more thoroughly and from various perspectives, including the connections to various biblical texts.

Finally, empirical hermeneutics has the potential to make a contribution to churches' and missions/development organizations' theology and practice. Some of the existing empirical studies have pointed out the importance of including the perspectives of ordinary readers into theological and hermeneutical reflection. Apart from liberation theology, the poor generally have been absent from theological reflection and decision-making; thus, they are theologically invisible. Poverty studies also have indicated the importance of involving the poor as subjects who ought to function as experts in their own communities and cultural contexts.

The two Bolivian communities that participated in the study are physically located only a few kilometers from each other; nevertheless, the realities in

7 For an example that support this, see Autero, "Ghosts, Women, and Evangelism," 267–289.

which each community lived seemed to be light years apart. As indicated, the concrete reminder of my own socio-economic status came across during one of the group sessions. In the middle of the Bible study, the pastor of the MG timidly asked me whether he could rise to the same socio-economic level as mine. After my hesitant affirmation, he replied quietly in front of the whole group, "it will surely take a long time."

This and many other personal encounters reminded me of the concrete hopes that many poor and marginalized people have of a better life in particular, and of the longings for a just and equal society in general. It also made me wonder about the possibility of bringing about real socio-economic transformation to communities like the one of which I had the privilege to be part—and of the part that biblical scholars might play in this endeavor. As one engages people on a personal level, it is extremely difficult to remain a mere researcher who tries to extract data for a project. It also alerts one to the ethical difficulties of doing research among poor communities, since the research assignment may end up becoming just another project that utilizes poor and marginalized people, rather than empowering them to move to fullness of life, hope, and dignity.

The privilege of engaging these two communities simultaneously reminded me of the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, which gap is not only economic but also social. As the pastor of the MG commented on his inability to attend a birthday party due to shame and exclusion, I can only wonder how many of our communities, religious and academic, unintentionally exclude the poor without realizing it. After all, most of us, and our institutions, operate on an underlying middle class script⁸ that is inclusive in theory but in practice excludes many who cannot afford the attire, gadgets, and accouterments that the mainstream culture assumes to be normal.

8 On the middle class script or assumptions about life in North America, see Smith, Kindle loc. 1495–1723. She writes "[l]ife as a stigmatized outsider to mainstream culture produces self-perpetuating problems of its own, such as a lack of knowledge of the middle class codes and soft skills that help people get ahead" (Smith, Kindle loc. 1695).

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